DAVID MCNALLY

SLAVERY AND CAPITALISM

A NEW MARXIST HISTORY

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David McNally

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For Sue, again and again

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Introduction

Whisperings of Freedom

Sir—I have left you, not to return . . .
No longer yours,
John S. Jacobs

Whoever writes about slavery writes about freedom. Genuine freedom—whose day we await—is the antithesis of slavery. It comes as little surprise, therefore, that enslaved people were probably the first to articulate liberty "as a social value."[1] Rather than an inherent property of self-possessed autonomous persons, as liberalism would have it, freedom erupts historically—as a goal of the oppressed. Of course, throughout our history, liberatory projects of the dominated have all too often been repressed and disfigured. Yet, freedom dreams merely shelter underground, changing shape, incubating hope.

Emancipatory desires persist because the reification of humans can never be more than partial. Even in the Atlantic world that forms the context for this study, the chattel relation, the reduction of humans to things, to items of property, was always precarious. As much as slaveowners anxiously affirmed and reaffirmed the chattel principle in laws, texts, rituals, and practices—and by way of whips, chains, jails, and slave patrols—it was an impossible quest. Look through the records of Atlantic slavery and everywhere we find enslaved people striking blows against bondage: breaking tools, pilfering food from storehouses, slowing down in the fields, asserting claims of kinship, taking refuge in forests, learning to read, joining revolts, tracking the North Star. In these ways, and so many more, they affirmed life against social death. And those affirmations have left indelible marks in the archives of the oppressed. Listen closely and we might still hear "the whisperings

among the slaves—their talking of freedom," so poignantly recalled by former bondwoman Mary Gladdy.[2]

Slavery and Capitalism takes this aspiration for freedom as the index of truth. It proceeds from the conviction that critical theory embodies an "interest in the liberation of mankind." Every state of affairs that belies freedom is false, a betrayal of the very ends of human life. This makes truth a partisan pursuit. The quest for true lives, where humans exercise communal powers of self-determination, entails siding against oppression, against all conditions of unfreedom. "Truth," remarked Malcom X, "is on the side of the oppressed today, it's against the oppressor."[3] To declare this commitment is decidedly unfashionable these days, especially when a whole body of scholarship, as we shall see, seeks to discredit the idea that bonded people ever had an eye for freedom.

The turn away from freedom as an ethical value and a historical referent is the sad product of sustained political retreat. Not only have the gains of freedom struggles of the 1960s and 1970s been persistently rolled back over the long night of neoliberalism; emancipatory aspirations are now routinely dismissed as hopelessly archaic. This depletion of radical imagination is yet another victory of our rulers. Adapting to a dramatic contraction in the horizons of possibility, a slew of scholars now insist that enslaved people were decidedly more sensible than to set their sights on liberty. One recent work instructs us that survival, not freedom, was the goal of enslaved people: "While historians have long been preoccupied by enslaved people's fight for 'freedom,'" it proffers, "this Western abstraction had little ideological resonance for Africans and even less practical relevance for people trying to cope with the daily realities of enslavement." One hopes that the sheer banality of the statement is self-evident. But it adheres to a longer tradition, rehearsing the elitism of Eugene Genovese, still a disproportionate influence on studies of the US South, who declared that bonded people lived in "acceptance of the state of things." Rather than aspire to lives beyond slavery, the enslaved are purported to have acquiesced: "The practical question facing the slaves was not whether slavery itself was an improper relation but how to *survive* it." Lacking the capacity to dream of liberty, it is alleged, benighted slaves merely struggled to survive. Another historian only makes matters worse by asserting that "Within a hierarchy of values, slaves chose family over freedom," oblivious that this counterposition makes sense only within the degraded conceptual universe of liberal individualism.[4]

It is within this theoretical field, alas, that recent critiques of the concept of *agency* in slavery studies have largely moved. To be sure, the

individualist notion of agency deserves scrutiny. Yet the concept itself ought not to be surrendered to a liberal humanism in which an individual "is the free, unconstrained author of meaning and action."[5] It is a severely impoverished outlook that can only imagine agents as possessive individualists, proprietors of right, property, and bourgeois selves. And it is politically dubious to discredit commitments to agency at the very time when subaltern groups, be they Black, trans, Palestinian, or working class, are asserting their power to change the world. Practitioners of history from below have long advanced a quite different notion of agency, one might say a dialectical one. Here, subaltern activity operates within forcefields of violence and social conflict, inscribed by structures of power but never fully absorbed by them. History from below brushes the archives against the grain to discern traces of resistant agency that complicate the narratives of power from above. It tracks the self-making of subaltern groups, embodied in stubbornly resistant practices, yet circumscribed by coercion and oppression. It thereby locates subaltern agency *within*, not prior to, forcefields of domination. In the case of the chattel bondperson, it illuminates the "unlawful agent," whose self-assertion contradicts legal denial of their personhood.[6]

Ironically, slaveowners themselves were often more attuned to enslaved agency than are some historians today. Virginia planter Robert L. Dabney remarked, for instance, that while slavery confers "a property in his involuntary labor" it does not provide "an ownership of the servant's moral personality."[7] Every attempt by planter regimes to restrict the mobility of bondpeople, to punish runaways and rebels, tacitly acknowledged this reality. Sidney Mintz perceived here an elemental fault line at the heart of the chattel relation: "The fundamental contradiction of such systems lies in their need to deal with men as non-men—that is to deny the humanity of the slaves themselves. But the slaves are human, and on one level at least, both masters and slaves know it. Since men are not machines, since they possess will, they can will to live or die."[8] To be human is, in short, to possess an impulse for freedom. It is to pursue self-determination—and this, for the oppressed, means to struggle.

For all its flaws, this is the profound insight of Hegel's dialectic of master and slave. The agency of the enslaved subject is not a preexisting attribute, but a historical and relational one, formed in action. At moments of self-assertion, writes Hegel, the bondperson, overcoming fear of the master, "posits *himself* as a negative in the order of things, and thereby becomes *for himself*, someone existing on his own account." Marx was certainly aware of the liberal elements that afflict Hegel's

account of subaltern agency and freedom. He assiduously reworked this conflict model in terms of an ontology of individuals-in-relation. Subaltern agency was thereby reconceptualized as a social attribute attained by means of collective action *within and against* the constraints of power and property, that is, through class struggle. More than this, the agents of struggle were seen as self-transforming. Social mobilization was thematized as a process of collective *self-making*. Rather than an innate property of the individual, subaltern agency emerges in this account as the resultant of social action. It is in their activity that people develop as agents. As astute commentators have pointed out, this concept of self-transforming social process also implies an ethics of self-emancipation.[9]

In avowing a social conception of freedom in opposition to the liberal-individualist one, I allude to Orlando Patterson's critical reminder that for enslaved people unfreedom took the form of alienation from kin relations, of *social death*. It follows that freedom involves a reconstitution of social bonds and solidarities, of family, kinship, community, and class identity.[10] Freedom carries a profoundly social index, as does the process through which subaltern people refashion themselves as potential agents of resistance and emancipation.

Rather than a pre-given attribute of sovereign individuals, freedom is thus a process of becoming, one steeped in conflict. Freedom is a *not-yet*.[11] It lives in practices and spaces that haunt orders of unfreedom. Further, it aspires not to a finished state, but to a new terrain of *freedom-making* as an always-unfinished collective social project. This is what it means to break from prehistory to fully human history. But none of this can be seen from the horizon of the liberal individualism that has dominated histories of slavery, particularly in the United States. As valuable as much work in this vein has been, it has arrived at a cul-de-sac in its singular inability to conceptualize subaltern freedom-making as collective praxis.

To avert this cul-de-sac, *Slavery and Capitalism* draws inspiration from the most radical implications of three great texts of the Black Radical Tradition: W.E.B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935), C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins* (1938), and Sylvia Wynter's "Black Metamorphosis" (1970s). Crucially, all three texts imagine the collective struggles of enslaved workers as forms of modern class struggle. To the degree to which a recuperative exercise lies at the heart of *Slavery and Capitalism*, it involves repurposing this insight—that enslaved workers on New World plantations comprised a modern working class.

Let us begin with Du Bois. *Black Reconstruction* audaciously asserts that it took a general strike—the mass flight of enslaved laborers from the plantation economy of the US South—to break the back of the Confederacy. The exodus of slaves from the slaveholding South, Du Bois wrote, "was a strike on a wide basis against the conditions of work. It was a general strike that involved directly in the end perhaps a half million people. They wanted to stop the economy of the plantation system, and to do that they left the plantations."[12] This is now familiar material. But lurking on its edges is another radical claim, one that is broached by C. L. R. James in *The Black Jacobins*. Describing the masses of Saint Domingue on the eve of their great uprisings of 1791, which became the Haitian Revolution, James wrote: "Working and living together in gangs of hundreds on the huge sugar-factories which covered the North Plain, they were closer to a modern proletariat than any group of workers in existence at the time, and the rising was, therefore, a thoroughly prepared and organized mass movement."[13]

Unlike most contributors to the discussion of slavery and capitalism, Du Bois and James focus on forms of class struggle *from below*. Additionally, they emphasize the capitalist character of the social conflicts that riddled the world of Atlantic slavery. Sylvia Wynter's "Black Metamorphosis" also treads this path. But Wynter is simultaneously attentive to the dialectics of race and class in the constitution of the chattel proletariat. Insisting that "the black in the New World was the first historical group to be created by global relations of production," Wynter portrays class and racial formation as moments of a single global process. "The systematic devaluation of the black as human," she writes, "went hand in hand with the systematic exploitation of his labor power."[14] Wynter grasps the New World plantation as part of a global process in which labor-power—the commodity that Marx places at the center of the drama of capitalism—is racially constituted throughout the Atlantic World. She theorizes emergent racial capitalism in terms of the commodification of labor-power.

As much as historians have acknowledged these monumental works in recent decades, they have frequently evaded their boldest claims. In particular, the provocative suggestion that plantation slaves comprised a modern working class has been sloughed off with some embarrassment, treated as a careless exaggeration. One encounters here a denial that disables critical theory, an avoidance that dulls the shock effects necessary to dialectical criticism. For, in the realm of the repressed—and the realities of Atlantic slavery are surely among the greatest repressed moments of

capitalist civilization—truth must disrupt; it must break up systems of denial that suppress self-knowledge. "In psychoanalysis," wrote Theodor Adorno, "only the exaggerations are true." And in a society sick with denial of the brutal facts of racial capitalism, only the exaggerations, only the brashest of provocations, can break through to disruptive truths. "Dialectical logic is critical logic," declared Marcuse; "it reveals modes and contents of thought which transcend the codified pattern of use and validation." In so doing, it "recovers tabooed meanings."[15]

This is the spirit in which *Slavery and Capitalism* revisits these titanic texts by Du Bois, James, and Wynter. To be sure, many commentators now accept that New World plantation slavery comprised a capitalist system of production. But an overarching reliance on liberal precepts renders the basis of that claim theoretically precarious. This follows from an identification of capitalism with markets—rather than with relations of production, exploitation, and the struggles that surround them. In the critical traditions of historical materialism to which this work is indebted, forms of society are inseparable from the fundamental productive and reproductive conflicts that shape them. This is why my insistence on the capitalist character of New World slavery is joined to the claim that Atlantic bondpeople comprised a "plantation proletariat," to borrow a term from Wynter.[16]

In the chapters that follow, I will vindicate this claim. Yet, in recuperating insights from Du Bois, James, and Wynter, my aim is not simple restatement. This is not a work primarily devoted to their analyses. *Slavery and Capitalism* moves beyond the orbit of their great texts, engaging colonial travel literature, planter records and diaries, slave narratives, political economy, and recent historical scholarship. It does so in a spirit of historical and theoretical construction. Crucially, I revisit key parts of Marx's critique of political economy to derive concepts necessary to comprehensively theorizing capitalism and Atlantic slavery.

THE NECESSITY OF THEORY

The prevalence of liberalism among historians often manifests as a disavowal of theory. This is because liberalism has been naturalized, rendered the common sense of a society that avoids critical self-reflection. To repudiate theory is to revert to the empiricist fallacy that "the facts" can speak for themselves. Yet, the facts of today are those of violence and oppression. To disavow theory is thus a form of resignation. The

appeal to ostensible facts alone leads to an intellectual impasse, to a sort of tacit conformism, which is where much historical analysis of slavery and capitalism finds itself today, notwithstanding some hugely valuable empirical research. *Slavery and Capitalism* attempts to break that impasse by bringing historical investigation together with critical theory. This is decidedly unfashionable today. Even among scholars associated with the New History of Capitalism (NHC), which took off in the United States in the early 2000s, disavowal of theory is routinely celebrated, notwithstanding a laudable desire to return historians to the problem of capitalism and its political economy. All too frequently, clarity is foresworn about the ostensible object of study: capitalism itself.

One recent work, for instance, bears the compelling title, *Slavery's Capitalism*. Yet the editors promptly announce their disinterest in the question "whether slavery was or was not capitalism," which would seem to raise some doubts about their very title.[17] The results have not been edifying. Notwithstanding intriguing investigations, the consequence of "eschewing economic theory in writing about capitalism and slavery," notes one critic, is that much of this new history appears "under-theorized and half-baked." And half-baked and under-theorized history regularly defaults to "the nineteenth-century fetishism of facts."[18] Description then masquerades as analysis. Disavowing theoretical definitions, remarks another commentator, new historians of capitalism "seem willing to let capitalism float as a placeholder while they look for ground-level evidence of a system in operation."[19] To be sure, ground-level evidence is indispensable, and this study endeavors to work on that terrain too. But however much empirical material is mobilized, however valuable many of the studies produced, shortcutting theory results in the systematic elision of *historical meaning*. For the meaning of historical phenomena can be discerned only by delineating the general directions, trajectories, conflicts, and contradictions inherent in a total social process. Just as the operation of an automobile engine cannot be derived from the mere existence of a spark plug, neither can the systemic workings of plantation capitalism be read off a bale of cotton unto itself.

Note my stipulation here: unto itself. As Marx demonstrates in *Capital*, one can indeed begin the analysis of capitalism with a commodity, so long as one follows it into its *relations* to other commodities—and to the acts of labor through which they came into being. In other words, the commodity must be seen relationally as part of the total social process through which it derives its social meaning. When Marx offers his exemplary equation, 20 yards of linen = one coat, he launches a

dialectical phenomenology of the commodity as a *historical social relation*. Any analysis of this sort is an exercise in theory, albeit of a particularly historical and materialist sort. The question is thus wrongly posed when an eminent historian asks, "What if we sought not to measure the extent to which 'the market' or 'capitalism' had penetrated the culture of cotton, but rather to understand more concretely and specifically the workings of this market—this way of employing capital—in this place at this point in time?"[20] For how are we to understand the "workings" of a market outside of some larger account of systemic interrelations of commodity and capital flows, price formation, rates of profit, monetary and financial instruments, forms of capital investment, and—crucially—the global network of labor processes that sustained them?[21] If we are to study New World slavery as a moment—that is, as an aspect or dimension—of global capitalism, then we are insisting that an individual phenomenon, such as a bale of cotton loaded onto a ship, be located within a dynamic system of social historical relations.

Slavery and Capitalism argues that the question of the capitalist nature of New World slavery can only be resolved at the level of totality. By this I refer to the contradictory social-economic dynamics—the "laws of motion" and patterns of class conflict—by which the system as a whole is produced and reproduced. The fundamental law of reproduction of capitalism—production and appropriation of surplus value by commodity-producing units locked in market competition—can only be adequately conceptualized in such terms. And such a system is always an organic one, undergoing internal transformations triggered by its contradictory laws of motion.

A century ago, Georg Lukacs pointed out that "the 'facts' of history must remain . . . in a state of crude, uncomprehended facticity" so long as "their real function in the historical process has been blocked *systematically* by methodically abandoning any claim to a knowledge of the totality."[22] *Slavery and Capitalism* subscribes to that conviction. Certainly, we ought to avoid reductive iterations of totality that subsume the vibrant interactions of historical life under predetermined shapes. But I am interested here in the *dialectical* concept of totality. This requires conceptually articulating the vigorous social processes—totalizations—in which properties of a whole emerge through complex, reciprocal determinations among its parts, all in a state of becoming.[23] Totalities cannot be grasped, therefore, by way of static concepts superimposed upon historical evidence. They must instead be reconstructed in their dynamic processes of development. As Karel Kosík astutely put

it, "Dialectics cannot grasp totality as a ready-made or formalized whole determining the parts because the *genesis* and *development* of totality are part of its very determination."[24] It follows that there is little to be gained in subsuming New World slavery under textbook definitions of capitalism bereft of historical movement. Instead, we must trace out the dynamic interrelations of plantation slavery and the capitalist mode of production to elucidate their global logic of development.

In probing the multidimensionality of all phenomena, dialectics resists the imposition of abstract conceptual uniformity. Lukacs again: "The category of totality does not reduce its various elements to an undifferentiated uniformity, to identity." Instead, dialectical logic grasps a *concrete totality* as a complexly differentiated and inherently dynamic system in which parts and subsystems have causative powers in constituting the whole. As Adorno reminds us, "Societal totality does not lead a life of its own over and above that which it unites and of which, in its turn, it is composed . . . System and individual entity are reciprocal and can only be apprehended in their reciprocity."[25] Yet much of the new history of capitalism evades these reciprocities of system and entity. Favoring description over theoretical analysis, it elides the historical meaning of capitalism as a system. Hence the impasse at which it has arrived.

. . .

Such an elision is not innocent. Academic research operates today on the terrain of dominant social forces and forms of thought. To abdicate critical theory is, however reluctantly, to default to the prevailing commonsense of liberal capitalism. Observe, for instance, the plethora of studies that, mimicking Adam Smith, fixate on trade and finance as the cornerstones of capitalism. Smith famously described "commercial society" as the outcome of an innate human propensity "to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another." And this crude liberal perspective all too often comprises the horizon of historians and social scientists, particularly in the United States. As the editors of a significant volume on the rise of capitalism in the United States put it, their contributors are less interested in the question of "Who built America" than in "Who sold America?" Or, more precisely, "Who financed those sales?"[26] In this spirit too, some scholars of the New History of Capitalism exhibit a preponderant concern with the operations of financial instruments—mortgages, bonds, and other credit devices—with which enslaved persons were bought, or by which they were used as collateral

for credit-based transactions. However much we might learn from detailed study of the interrelations of slavery and finance, an excessive focus here tends to obscure enslaved workers as *producers*.[27] Equally disabling, an overriding emphasis on trade and finance readily facilitates the idea that what ails modern society is entirely rooted there too. The result is an account of capitalism's ills as a story of market deception, fraud, and credit swindles. One historian working in this register has even claimed that "at its core, capitalism was little more than a confidence game."[28] This simply will not do as either history or political economy of capitalism.

There is a compelling reason that Marx's account of the fetishism of commodities has proved so indispensable to a critical theory of capitalism. Observed merely at its most superficial level—as a network of trade in goods and services and flows of money—capitalism is susceptible to representation as a system of transactions between legally free and equal sovereign individuals each voluntarily entering into market relations with others. "The sphere of circulation," wrote Marx, appears then as "a very Eden of the innate rights of man. It is the exclusive realm of Freedom, Equality, Property, and Bentham." A critical jolt occurs, however, when we turn to the "hidden abode of production," a pivot that liberal economics resists. In this hidden abode, we encounter workers directly subjected to the despotism of capital, which controls their bodies and exposes them to the stresses and damages of production as an end in itself.[29] The society of market exchange now appears as a system of coerced labor. In systematically avoiding inquiry into the sphere of production, liberal economics treats human productive activity as merely a technical set of interchanges with the natural world, rather than a historically constituted system of (alienated and exploitative) social relations regulating human metabolism with nature. Production is thus naturalized—along with the relations of domination and exploitation that comprise it. Marx's defetishizing critique challenges such reification. At the very point where liberal political economy ejects history, Marx recaptures it. He denaturalizes capital by insisting on its historicity. This is why the first volume of *Capital* concludes with its famous section on the originary accumulation (*ünsprungliche Akkumulation*) of capital. Dialectical criticism thereby cracks open capital's reified appearances to reveal the churning flux of history. And it is not a pretty picture. Beneath the mundane circuits of commodities and money, we encounter a history of violence written "in letters of blood and fire."[30]

In short-circuiting critical theory, an undercurrent in the New History of Capitalism has sanitized the story of capital's operations in our world. In focusing on banks, traders, and credit markets, it has offered up "a capitalism born without blood," as one critic rightly notes.[31] It can then readily join a long line of muckraking criticism that targets market manipulation and deception as our modern ailment. To be sure, the blatant extortions of confidence schemes and monopoly power lend themselves to compelling dramas of hubris and deceit. But this overemphasis on the sphere of circulation succumbs to the prevailing commonsense about capitalism. Liberalism's signature, as we have seen, is market fundamentalism, the definition of modern society in terms of free exchange among sovereign individuals. Con games then stand out as aberrations, as violations of "proper" exchange relations. To flip liberalism on its head by insisting that capitalism *is* a con game appears heretical. But such gadfly claims fail the test of critical theory. In accepting that market exchange is the locus of the system, they collude in the very obscuring of the *laboring body* that characterizes liberal political economy. Analysts can then discuss the circulation of financial bonds collateralized by slaves without so much as gesturing to the relations of exploitation in which chattel laborers produced commodities (and surplus value) for their owners. But to imagine these financial dramas as the source of capitalist wealth does more than obscure the realm of production—of bodies that produce, break down, and resist under the dictates of capital. In invisibilizing the world of labor, naturalized as a mere backdrop, these histories treat sellers, buyers, and financiers—but rarely the direct producers—as the dramatis personae of social history. Crucially, they elide all of the ways in which the producers themselves contest and resist the domination of capital. The collective agency of the oppressed and exploited as potential makers of a new world conveniently slips from view. The result is history without class struggle, or at least class struggle *from below*. This leaves us, at best, with a politics of market reforms, such as curbing monopoly power, in the quest for social justice rather than one of radically transforming relations of production. Liberalism, rather than anticapitalism, becomes the horizon of social and intellectual critique.[32]

From its inception, liberalism has been drenched in the blood of slavery. As we shall see, it was Britain, the first fully capitalist nation-state, that most fully embraced the chattel principle, the idea that bondpeople were property, pure and simple. It should not surprise us that a ruling class expert in violently suppressing the poor in the name of capitalist

property also fashioned the most developed forms of plantation slavery. This is one reason *Slavery and Capitalism* devotes primary attention to the British West Indies and the US South, which became the largest and most dynamic centers of the Atlantic slave system. It was a British colony (Barbados) that pioneered slave-based sugar capitalism, and by 1807 two-thirds of all New World slaves were to be found in British colonies. Moreover, by the midpoint of the nineteenth century, the US South comprised the largest slave society in the New World, encompassing four million bonded people. The British model would, in time, be emulated by its imperial rivals. As England successively defeated Spain, the Netherlands, and France, its rivals were driven to adapt the social relations and technologies of industrial slavery to their New World colonies, or risk drowning in the seas of global competition.[33]

It is very much to the credit of many contributors to the New History of Capitalism to have defied liberal conventions by insisting on the connection between capitalism and slavery. Yet, the analysis has too often been disabled by the superficial treatment of Marxism that passes as scholarly commentary in the United States. The historical weakness of working-class and socialist movements in the United States has been mirrored by the shallowness of intellectual engagements with the Marxian tradition. This includes work of ostensibly Marxist provenance. From Eugene Genovese's modernization theory glossed with a crude sociology of "class" to the cookie-cutter operations of formalist Marxism—according to which capitalism = free labor, slavery = unfree labor—much ostensibly historical materialist work has generated impoverished theory and stultified history. Genovese's Weberian commentary on New World slavery, which sees Southern planters as "a pre-bourgeois ruling class," has been particularly pernicious in this regard. His confusions have been compounded by claims that enslaved laborers were "constant capital" and that, therefore, they were "by definition" incapable of producing surplus value.[34] Such definitionalism is a mode of "bad dialectic," to borrow a term from Merleau-Ponty, skipping over deep engagement with the material in order to impose "an external law and framework on the content." However tempting this can be for those seeking formalist solutions, the end result is a "slipping away of life and of history," an abdication of real dialectics.[35]

But the conceptual mistakes of some do not justify the misleading claims about Marxism littered throughout the New History of Capitalism. Take for example Walter Johnson's assertion that "the intellectual tradition" associated with Marx "has most actively kept alive the idea

that when you talk about 'capitalism' and 'slavery' you are talking about two things, rather than one."[36] This claim rankles not only because it flies in the face of positions developed by Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, and Vladimir Lenin, among other classical Marxist writers. More than this, it displays a striking disregard for a vibrant tradition of Caribbean Marxism—best represented in this area by C. L. R. James, Sylvia Wynter, and Aimé Césaire, among others.[37] These outstanding theorists not only treated New World slavery as a modality of capitalism; they also analyzed colonialism and racism as constitutive of world capitalism. In sheer oblivion of this tradition, which serves as a point of inspiration for my work, we continue to encounter US scholars declaring that "Marxist historians emphatically deny that slavery is capitalism," and that Marxism separates "slavery and capitalism into antithetical modes of production."[38] Not only do such claims fly in the face of powerful evidence to the contrary; they also reproduce the stubborn ignorance of so much of the US academy about Marxist critical theory, the global Black Radical Tradition, and their convergence in "the Black–Red encounter."[39]

Slavery and Capitalism takes its inspiration from these outcast traditions.[40] It deploys key insights lurking there to probe the interrelations of New World slavery and global capitalism. It also adheres to critical work in historical materialism that approaches historical time as nonlinear and hypercomplex. We now have more than a century of Marxist explorations of processes of *uneven and combined development*, that is, the weaving together of social forms with radically different temporalities into a complex but unitary history.[41] Yet ill-informed critics persist in attributing a commitment to linear stages (all arranged in a rigid sequence) to historical materialism. Recently, several US historians tossed off the thoroughly wrong-headed claim that "Marx argued that slavery belonged to an earlier stage of 'primitive accumulation.'"[42] In so doing, they uncritically reproduced one of the most egregious, and most frequently repeated, misrepresentations of Marxism. No responsible reading of part eight of *Capital* (volume 1)—the text that analyzes "the so-called primitive accumulation of capital"—should be capable of landing on such a claim. As much work in the field has emphasized, Marx's critique of the political economy of capitalism posits a contradictory unity of multiple temporalities: a linear time of immediate production; a cyclical time of circulation; and an explosive (and crisis-ridden) unity of the conflicting temporalities of systemic reproduction.[43] In both these approaches—that of uneven and combined development and that

of the hypercomplex temporalities of capital—"old" and "new," "premodern" and "modern" join together in hybrid concatenations that defy linearity. Indeed, it is in this spirit that C. L. R. James imagined the Caribbean plantation as "at the advanced front of modern capitalism," to quote Stuart Hall. For James, explains Hall, "Slavery did not function as a kind of archaic remnant . . . Far from it. It is exactly the most archaic social relations which are preserved in the modern system."[44]

This brings us to an equally crucial point of theory and method. *Slavery and Capitalism* insists on historical materialism as a research program devoted to generating new knowledge—and new concepts appropriate to it. Such a program cannot be satisfied with mere recitation of established positions. Against a "monotonous formalism" that applies a priori conceptual schemas, a dialectical-historical investigation "demands surrender to the life of the object," as Hegel puts it, a protocol obliging investigators to immerse themselves in the material of the research field. Anything else represents a lack of responsibility to the archives of human experience. For this reason, *Slavery and Capitalism* opens with a series of chapters that trace key moments in the emergence of the integrated slave plantation in the English Caribbean and the US South. In later chapters, concepts are developed more systematically in order to illuminate the social logic of this history. I try therefore to honor E. P. Thompson's program for explicating the "historical logic" of social processes through "a dialogue between concept and evidence."[45] This twofold movement between concept and evidence is genuinely reciprocal: concepts are deepened and reshaped as they engage with historical archives, just as the social meaning of "facts" is captured only in and through concepts adequate to the total historical process. This reciprocity of theory and history is indispensable to overcoming the bifurcation of the field into empiricist history that evades theory on the one hand, and theoretical formalism that proffers lifeless abstractions on the other.

Overcoming this bifurcation involves building *new concepts* appropriate to both historical evidence and theoretical precision. Disparaging the dogmatism of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon in this regard, Marx remarked that the French writer was "stricken with sterility when it is a question of engendering a new category by dialectical birth-throes."[46] Yet, the generation of new categories suitable to the complex movement of social life is intrinsic to all critical historical research. In this spirit, I revisit relatively abandoned lines of analysis in Marxian research—such as Marx's engagements with issues of race and abolition in the United States—insisting they be pushed to a higher level of theoretical formula-

tion and political resonance. I do not claim that Marx drew all of the conclusions I propose; I urge instead that my analyses develop critical concepts of historical materialist provenance. Some readers, however, will find particularly jarring the concepts of *bonded labor-power*, the *coerced subsumption* of labor to capital, and the *chattel proletariat*, which I develop in later chapters. I ask merely that they engage in good faith with the dialogue of concepts and evidence through which they are produced.

STRUCTURE OF THE ARGUMENT

Slavery and Capital observes a threefold structure. Part one, "The Planter, the President, and the Political Economist: Foundations of Capitalist Slavery," explores Barbados, Virginia, and the British colonial use of bonded labor. Chapter 1 traces Richard Ligon's direct involvement in the birth of the Barbadian plantation complex based on gang labor. The next chapter finds George Washington at the center of Indigenous dispossession, warfare, and the construction of racial capitalism in Virginia. Chapter 3 then follows Marx as he tracks the British colonial official and economist Edward Gibbon Wakefield's writings on bonded labor in the colonies. Just where it stops—at the implications of Wakefield's work for understanding primitive accumulation in Europe—I push Marx's analysis toward sustained engagement with bondage and the exploitation of labor in the colonies.

Part two, "The Political Economy of the Plantation System," then deepens the economic analysis of the plantation complex. Here, the evident profitability of Atlantic slavery, laid out in chapter 4, is linked to an understanding of chattel workers as living labor, that is, bearers of labor-power. Moreover, these laborers generated the immense profits of plantation slavery—which is to say that they produced *surplus value*. Because of the mechanical identification in many quarters of wages (and surplus value) with "free labor," chapter 5 establishes that episodic receipt of wages characterized the lives of huge numbers of enslaved people. Chapter 6 then shows that, unlike "constant capital," bondpeople were regularly engaged in defiance, refusals, strikes, and escapes. In short, they systematically resisted their domination by planter capital.

Finally, part three, "The Making of a Chattel Proletariat," makes the case that enslaved people participated in forms of class struggle and developed values much more similar to full-time wage laborers than has generally been appreciated. Chapter 7 demonstrates, contrary to so

much confusion in the literature, that enslaved people regularly engaged in strike action by withdrawing their labor-power. Indeed, a serious case can be made that Atlantic bondpeople were the first workers of the industrial age to use the mass strike as a weapon of struggle and emancipation. As profoundly significant as this conclusion is, chapter 8 insists that resistance was much larger than the strike. In particular, it involved the entire sphere of social reproduction and life-making, where enslaved women gave the lead. After all, to defend life against the reifying tendencies of social death was inherently a form of resistance to the slave system. And this meant, as chapter 9 shows, that the Atlantic chattel proletariat was engaged in building cultures of freedom central to which was a *producer ethic* based on the right of workers to all that they produced. Chapter 10 then takes the experience of this chattel proletariat into the era of industrial capitalism, the "second slavery," and the rise of revolutionary abolitionism. Here we encounter in the United States a promising convergence during the 1850s and 1860s of working-class radicals and abolitionists, a convergence that advanced crucial elements of an antiracist Marxism. The latter did not survive the defeat of Reconstruction in the United States. But its legacy would later be taken up by the likes of Du Bois, Wynter, and James.

. . .

The concept of the *chattel proletariat* is a pivot point in this work. It is elaborated in terms of Marx's theory of surplus value and by way of an account of the enduring forms of contestation over work and life that animated enslaved struggles against the planter class. In this respect, I endeavor to honor the protocols of history from below in urging that class can only be fully understood in terms of how the exploited *make themselves* as they resist their exploitation.[47] Theorizing class in relational terms, I focus on how it is *lived* by groups of people in specific social relations. In this spirit, let us consider again the classic passage from *The Black Jacobins* about the bondpeople who made the revolution in Haiti: "Working and living together in gangs of hundreds on the huge sugar-factories which covered the North Plain, they were closer to a modern proletariat than any group of workers in existence at the time, and the rising was, therefore, a thoroughly prepared and organized mass movement."[48] Note this insistence that proletarian conditions of life enabled the revolutionaries of Saint-Domingue to initiate "a thoroughly prepared and organized" mass insurrection. For James, methods of struggle and organization are indicators of the character and quali-

ties of a class. And rightly so. As I show throughout this study, chattel laborers regularly organized and resisted in demonstrably working-class ways while articulating recognizably working-class values. Not only did they do so in the sphere of production but also, crucially, in the domain of the social reproduction of life itself.

Once we appreciate this, the story of enslaved Africans in the Atlantic world emerges as an integral part of the process of global dispossession known as "primitive accumulation," a critical moment in the emergence of the international proletariat. And if this is so, the rebellions undertaken by plantation laborers then stand out as part of modern labor history, as stations on the road to emancipation of the workers of the world.

Whoever writes about slavery writes about freedom.

CHAPTER 1

Planting and Profit

Richard Ligon and the Birth of Capitalist Slavery

the poor Negroes . . . by the labor of whose hands, our profit is brought in

—Richard Ligon

Richard Ligon was present at the birth of a new social order in Barbados. He was also its first serious chronicler. Sugar and slavery had been combined, of course, by Spanish colonizers in the Madeira and Canary Islands in the fifteenth century, in Hispaniola and Cuba in the next century, and subsequently by the Portuguese in colonial Brazil. But none of these combinations resembled what emerged in Barbados. There, enslaved labor was deployed in unprecedented concentrations and intensities. In fifteenth-century Madeira, by contrast, 85 percent of the island's more than 500 sugar producers owned no slaves at all. And while enslaved workers did predominate in cultivating and processing sugar in sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Cuba and Brazil, they typically toiled in small numbers for farmers too poor to afford large mills or machines. In Cuba, for instance, the average sugar master of the period owned 16 slaves and made little use of water-power or processing machinery. It was not until the late eighteenth century that some Cuban colonists emulated the British plantation model; not until the 1820s would it become predominant. In Brazil too, sugar production in the century after 1550 was dominated by small farmers, chronically short of capital, who owned relatively few bondpeople. Soon, that industry entered a long, if uneven, decline.[1]

What emerged in Barbados between 1640 and 1680 was qualitatively distinct: agro-industrial production of commodified sugar by enslaved

gangs of African descent, working on giant estates under military-type discipline. Father Antoine Biet was quite familiar with the French Caribbean prior to his 1654 visit to Barbados; yet he was completely unprepared for the sight of 200 slaves toiling on James Drax's Barbadian sugar estate. To be sure, Drax was ahead of the times. But only slightly. By the 1670s and 1680s, members of the planter elite in Barbados regularly owned estates of up to 1,000 acres worked by 130 bonded laborers or more. These were at the time among the largest workplaces in the world.[2]

Ligon's arrival in Barbados came after demoralizing defeats. It had all begun in 1642, when peasants and cottagers in Lincolnshire, England, rose up against plans to enclose and drain local wetlands. The lands, known as fens, defended by these rebels comprised common pasture fields, hunting and fishing grounds, and forests and fields for gathering wood and peat—all indispensable to the survival of peasant farmers and landless laborers. Little surprise then that rural insurgents gathered in crowds of 500 or more to destroy fences, tear down the intruders' houses, and drive them from the locality, all in the longest uninterrupted battle against enclosure in eastern England. In court documents, the would-be enclosers claimed these "assemblies of diverse riotous and unruly persons" had inflicted losses of £60,000 upon them.[3]

Among the losers was Richard Ligon, younger son of a Wiltshire gentry couple. Ligon seemed disposed to failed ventures. Four years later he would again be defeated by "riotous and unruly persons." Having thrown in his lot with the royalists during the English Civil War, he was with the troops that surrendered to the revolutionaries of the New Model Army at Exeter. Defeated and disgraced, Ligon wagered on a fresh start as a plantation manager in Barbados. At last, he found himself on the winning side. For three years he supervised the production of sugar by bonded laborers—to the great profit of his employer. Hopeful that his fortunes had changed, he returned to England in 1650 only to be thrown into debtors' prison.[4] Behind bars, he made somewhat better use of his time by writing his *True and Exact Historie of the Island of Barbados* (1657), which would become an indispensable source for historians of New World slavery.

. . .

"It was Barbados in the 1640s and 1650s that would provide the model and set the trend," writes J.H. Elliott. And it was the English colonies that generalized this model, based on unique—and uniquely brutal—forms of mobilizing and managing labor. This was the essence of "the

sugar revolution": the deployment and domination of bonded labor on unprecedented scales in an agro-industrial complex that encompassed planting, cultivating, milling, boiling, and distilling.[5] The integrated plantation was the institutional form in which modern racial capitalism emerged in the Atlantic World. Fueled by a growing mass of displaced laborers—the bulk of them forcibly dispossessed through the violence of the Atlantic slave trade—large-scale sugar capitalism generated a New World gentry that concentrated wealth at the expense of smaller farmers. By 1680, a mere 175 Barbadian planters—representing 7 percent of all landowners—held more than half of all the land, servants, and slaves on the island.[6] Sustaining it all was a class of enslaved Black laborers. Before the seventeenth century was out, members of the Barbadian planter gentry were among the richest men in the English empire.

PLANTER CAPITALISM AND THE DISCOURSE OF "IMPROVEMENT"

Ligon's *History* describes these transformations in multiple registers. He weaves together a series of genres—adventure tale, travel narrative, natural history, agricultural improvement manual, accounting guidebook—into a singular account of making money by making sugar. In so doing, he practically invented what would come to be known as "political arithmetic." More than anything else, however, Ligon's text was framed as a sort of "natural and experimental history," to borrow a term popularized by Francis Bacon. In the early-modern period, Baconian social philosophy, with its emphasis on empirical study for purposes of *improvement*, the harnessing of nature's powers to human ends, had rallied natural scientists, social reformers, surveyors, and experimenters in husbandry to its banner. By the time Ligon arrived in Barbados, the doctrine of improvement was a linchpin in the mental universe of reforming scholars, writers, state officials, colonizers, and agricultural experimenters.[7]

The English term *improvement* made its appearance in the early fourteenth century to indicate the enclosure and planting of unoccupied or "waste" land. By the sixteenth century it specifically denoted practices that rendered land more profitable, particularly enclosure, draining of fens, consolidation of land holdings, and investment in new techniques of husbandry. These meanings are in play in John Fitzherbert's *Boke of surveyeng and improvementes* published in 1523, among the earliest of agrarian improvement tracts. No other European

language had a synonym for the English word *improvement*. Furthermore, its English usage was proliferative. In the last two decades of the seventeenth century it appeared in the title of 360 English works. During the final twenty years of the next century it graced 3,000 new titles.[8] In fact, British capitalism came into the world under the banner of "improvement," invoking the powers of science and reason against traditional practices that infringed on the pursuit of profit.[9]

Scientific improvers celebrated the destruction of the old world of peasant-based agriculture joined to common lands and rights, and its replacement by large, enclosed, capital-intensive farms producing agricultural commodities by means of hired labor. Underwriting capitalist farming of this sort were pervasive innovations in technique: scientific crop rotation; application of fertilizers; development of new seed strains; the invention of new hoes and plows; increased use of animal power; improved mills. Yet, these scientific and technical transformations had a social prerequisite: the disappearance of small peasant farming so that labor and means of production could be applied on ever larger scales. By 1550, 45 percent of English lands had already been enclosed; 200 years later fully three-quarters would be fenced and bounded. The privatization of common lands, forests, and fens signaled the end of the peasantry. In 1540, there had been just over 300,000 landless laborers in England and Wales. A century later there were more than two million. This was the key to capitalist prosperity in the countryside. Rural dispossession and the consolidation of capitalist farms stimulated a doubling of agricultural output between 1560 and 1760—and with that doubling came enormous increases in rents and profits. Crucially, all of these gains were accomplished *without* increase in the agrarian workforce. Instead, they were achieved in quintessentially capitalist fashion: by ratcheting up product per agricultural laborer. Output grew; labor inputs did not. Yet, population kept growing. So, as demand for rural labor stagnated, the pauper population soared, and masses of people flocked to the cities and towns.[10]

The capitalist transformation of English rural society was without precedent. In 1600, there was little difference in agricultural output per laborer in France and England. A century and a half later, English output per worker was twice as large. Meanwhile, population nearly doubled in England while it largely stagnated across continental Europe.[11] This is why the rise of capitalism in England was accompanied by a growing "surplus" population, a subclass of the landless poor unable to find work for wages. It is also one of the reasons that the development of

English colonies became synonymous with the term *plantation*. Not only did English colonialism revolve around a decidedly capitalist form of "improved" agriculture; it also entailed the "planting" of people, siphoned off from the surplus population, on newly conquered lands.

The description of colonization as *planting* was unique to England. The metaphor was in circulation by the late sixteenth century when the younger Richard Hakluyt used it in the title of his work, *Discourse of Western Planting* (1584), presented to Queen Elizabeth.[12] Hakluyt was primarily committed to "planting" in Ireland, though colonial desires would soon turn to Virginia and beyond. Francis Bacon took up the theme in his 1625 essay "Of Plantations," advising colonizers to pay attention to "the people wherewith you plant." He further urged them to set those people to work producing "commodities" in order to "help to defray the charge of the plantation."[13] Here *plantation* is associated with settler colonialism *and* commodity-producing agriculture. In a dialectic of inner and outer, English capitalism had become a voracious machinery of dispossession, expropriating peasant lands at home and colonizing lands overseas. Its distinctive form of colonialism pivoted on the planting of commodity-producing farms reliant on bonded labor.

In this lexicon, to colonize *was* to improve—not just land, but people too. The Irish were among the first ostensible beneficiaries of this civilizing uplift. Edmund Spenser in his *View of the Present State of Ireland* (1596) promised that England's improved husbandry would entice the Irish away from their "barbarism and savage life." Seven years later, Bacon declared that the system of improved agriculture would "reclaim" the Irish "from their barbarous manners." Fortuitously, this divinely ordained civilizational mission made some people fabulously rich as settler-colonizers grabbed the lands from which the barbarians were removed.[14]

Lest this appear unfair to people who had used such lands since time immemorial, divine providence came to the rescue. The creator had apparently decreed that people should no more be left in a wild state than should land. To appropriate land from wild, licentious, and barbaric peoples, like the Irish and the Indigenous people of the Americas, was thus a sacred mission.[15] Maps, ledgers, and the occasional holy book in hand, English colonizers went forth snatching lands from the native Irish, along with other ostensible barbarians, in a mission of civilizational uplift. While all European colonizers draped their ventures in religious garb, only the English did so in the idiom of planting. On the occasion of the departure from England of John Winthrop and mem-

bers of the Massachusetts Bay Company, Reverend John Cotton delivered a sermon bearing the title, "Gods Promise to His Plantation."[16]

A NEW KIND OF COLONIALISM

Aware of the uniqueness of English colonialism, Elliott proclaims that "the English . . . were always 'planters' not 'conquerors.'"[17] We might more accurately say they conquered *by planting*, by means of building prison labor camps, known as plantations. And planting pivoted on violent displacement of the Indigenous inhabitants of colonized land, thus rendering a *double dispossession*—of Africans and Indigenous peoples—foundational to colonial racial capitalism in the New World.

The English were at first unique in building colonies based primarily on agricultural production for world markets rather than on looting gold and silver, the latter being the tendency of Spanish colonialism derided by Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations*. Fundamental to classical political economy was the insight that monetary wealth accrues to those who win the battle of competition for world markets. The mere pursuit of silver and gold ("mercantilism" in Smith's description) was hazardous insofar as it did not build up forces of production—improved land, tools and equipment, buildings, and reserves of labor-power. Yet the latter are the keys to dominating global production and exchange. As the Spanish empire learned, precious metals invariably end up in the hands of those who most effectively produce and sell the world's commodities, not those who loot its metals. A century before Smith's classic work, Anthony Ashley Cooper—patron of John Locke and one of the founding proprietors of the colony of Carolina—urged an associate to conceal "knowledge or conjecture of Mines" in his colony out of "feare our People being tempted by the hopes of present gaine should forsake their Plantation and so run themselves into certaine Ruine." Yet that is exactly the model that predominated in Spanish and Portuguese New World colonies. The economic center of Spain's New World empire was Potosi, the enormous silver mountain where millions of Indigenous and African slaves died to satisfy their conquerors' hunger for gold and silver. The Spanish imperialism of this era was indeed, as Pierre Vilar wrote, "the highest stage of feudalism." Its architects pursued precious metal, not commodity production. In Brazil, similarly, Portuguese colonialism set far more slaves to work in gold mines in the early-modern period than it ever deployed on sugar estates. Slave production of market goods like hides, sugar, and coffee was always ancillary to the con-

certed extraction of precious metal in the Iberian colonies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Even in Brazilian sugar production, "there were few large-sized concentrations of slaves" appropriate to large-scale colonial agrarian capitalism.[18]

The focus of English New World colonialism, by contrast, was on seizing land, dispossessing those who held it, and "planting" it for purposes of private commodity production. This reflected the pattern of the agrarian capitalism that had already transformed the English countryside. And it accounts for a shift in the meaning of "plantation." From indicating a settled crown colony, the term came increasingly to reference a *private* colonial estate. Having landed in Brazil, the fictional Englishman Robinson Crusoe declared that he "would turn planter" by building a "plantation and sugar-house" and that he intended to purchase as much land as he could for "my plantation and settlement." Predictably, Crusoe next purchased "a servant under bond for six years service" and, soon after, "a *Negro* slave." Here we have the paradigmatic British colonial plantation, with private land worked by bonded labor. Decades earlier, the two meanings of plantation—crown colony and private estate—intertwined in the letters of Anthony Ashley Cooper (later Lord Shaftesbury) concerning the creation of the colony of Carolina in the 1660s and 1670s. Much of the time Ashley uses "plantation" to refer to the colony as a whole. But he also refers to his own "private plantation" and to his commitment to "making a Plantation for myselfe." It is true that Spain's conquistadors were private adventurers licensed by the crown. But they were not primarily engaged in building commodity-producing estates. It was the English who first created a system of private plantations devoted to producing commodities, rather than tributary colonies that funneled precious metals to the metropole.[19] Contra Elliott, however, this too was a mode of conquest, as Indigenous peoples quickly learned. What distinguished English colonialism was the *violence of enclosure*. Settler colonial warfare forcibly cleared land of people so that it might be rendered "waste" and "vacant," the better to be "improved." As in England, the enclosure movement in the Americas would be stretched out over several hundred years. And in the face of Indigenous resistance to displacement, it was regularly punctuated by wars of dispossession and extermination.[20]

Of course, there was also widespread Indigenous enslavement in the Americas. The Spanish colonial empire used a variety of forms of native bondage, particularly in silver and gold mines, where enslaved people were literally worked to death. Hundreds of thousands of "Indian slaves" fueled Spain's New World colonies. Indigenous slavery was not

as prevalent north of Mexico, but its extent should not be discounted. Enslavement of Indigenous peoples commenced from the earliest days of English colonization of Virginia. But it was the English colonists of Carolina, whose colony was designed by John Locke and his wealthy patron Anthony Ashley Cooper, who soon became "*the* Indian slave traders of the North American continent," selling thousands of native bondpeople to buyers from Connecticut to Barbados. Many were also purchased close by: in 1708, fully one-third of the 4,300 slaves in South Carolina were Indigenous women, men, and children. The best estimate of the number of Indigenous slaves sold from the United States as a whole into the British slave trade runs into the tens of thousands: between 30,000 and 50,000 before 1715.[21] On top of this, small numbers of Indigenous people were enslaved by French colonists in Louisiana, where they were sometimes traded in the French Caribbean for African slaves. And from the 1820s on, the Navajo felt the sting of enslavement in New Mexico.[22] But the capacities of Indigenous people for resistance on the North American land mass significantly raised the costs of enslavement at a time when growing numbers of bonded Africans were being hurled onto the market. This is why the British colonial plantation complex would ultimately be erected on the laboring bodies of millions of enslaved people of African descent—underpinned by the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands, often via wars of extermination.

The weapons of land expropriation in the mainland colonies were many. Alongside rifles and bullets, settlers carried tools of surveying and mapping. In the Shenandoah Valley region of Virginia, native people referred to a surveyor's compass as the "land stealer."[23] They had good cause. Maps, after all, were a technology indispensable to enclosing and privatizing land. Before 1500, mapping was virtually unknown in the English countryside. Until then, land was understood primarily through embodied collective memory, often enacted in annual perambulations where community members shouted out the status of holdings as they walked them. But these customary forms of social knowledge were uprooted by the abstracting operations of surveying, measuring, and pricing. The very title of John Fitzherbert's *Boke of surveyeng and improvementes* (1523) indicated what was coming—surveying as a means to enclosure and "improvement." Parcels of land henceforth became geometrical units—so many yards, acres, etc.—that could be laid out on the abstracted space of maps in defiance of entanglements with concrete people, social customs, and communal practices. Not only could land be reduced to standardized physical units; it

could also be expressed in abstract monetary terms—equated to the average output per acre of so much corn, tobacco, or sugar, all of which could be converted into monetary prices. Through the magic of the market, geometric units of land metamorphosed into units of money. Bacon's injunction that, to be known, all things must be "numbered, weighed, measured and defined" captured this logic of quantification at the heart of the monetary calculus. And Indigenous peoples were to pay the real price in dispossession, disease, and death.[24]

Along with providing cognitive and practical tools for parceling and privatizing units of land, surveying was essential to claiming legal title. "Real" estate had to be measured, recorded, and legally documented. "From the later sixteenth-century," observes one historian, "maps became an increasingly important 'tool of Empire' in the English colonial experience, especially in Ireland." Starting in 1606, James I required all Irish landowners to prove their titles to land. Many could not, of course, having held their lands by ancient customs, not recorded documents. Eager colonial planters stood by—with surveyors and armed men.[25]

The new practices of surveying, mapping, enclosing, appropriating, and privatizing were rendered intelligible in the lexicon of anatomy. To anatomize, after all, was to dissect, study, label, and map. The fact that anatomy was routinely performed on the corpses of paupers and criminals made it all the more readily transferable to colonial others. Thus, Fynes Moryson, secretary to the commander of the English army in Ireland, titled a 1615 essay "The Anatomy of Ireland." Forty years later, during the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland, William Petty, who in 1655–56 produced the first survey of Irish lands, also wrote a *Political Anatomy of Ireland*, published posthumously. English colonizers came to anatomize Ireland, to chop it up, to dissect it, the better to own it. In 1641, before Petty joined Cromwell's Irish adventure, 61 percent of all Irish lands were in the hands of Catholics; by 1704 Catholics held a mere 14 percent.[26] Everywhere colonial surveyors went, dispossession followed. Perhaps fittingly, George Washington got his start as a surveyor in the colonial United States. In short order he became an accomplished Indian hunter, slaveowner, and planter capitalist. We will get to the first president soon. But we are not yet done with Richard Ligon.

MAPPING LAND AND LABORERS

Appropriately, Ligon's *History* begins with a map of Barbados. It is presented as an exercise in Baconian "natural and experimental history"

whose overarching metaphors are derived from botany and farming—planting, growing, and husbanding in particular. The early pages are full of "Sea delights"—porpoises, dolphins, sea birds, turtles, sharks, whales, and more. Before long we encounter African women, who are also brought under the gaze of colonial exoticism. Ligon extols the beauty of "pretty young Negro virgins" and "nymphs" and declares their splendor to be without parallel "in my whole search through the world."[27] We are soon landed in Barbados, where the less exotic tasks of buying and equipping a plantation commence. Ligon describes the cash crops that have been planted on the island—tobacco, indigo, cotton, and sugar—and then moves to the laborers who plant, cultivate, and harvest them. Barbados's "servants, both Christians and slaves," he instructs us, toil "ten hours a day" to produce these goods. Turning to the foods that grow on the island, he glimpses the laborers once more, noting the stark contrast between their diet and that of the wealthy planters.[28]

Biology soon morphs again into sociology. While enumerating the island's plant species, he finds himself offering a taxonomy of social groups and classes. "The island is divided into three types of men," he pronounces, "*viz*. Masters, Servants, and Slaves." Yet, as much as he distinguishes the latter groups, an uncertainty hovers over these terms. Occasionally, slaves are described as a type of "servant"—Negro servants rather than Christian ones. The line of differentiation here is religion: Christian versus non-Christian. Ligon does not ground his sociology of class in doctrines of immutable difference; he insists on the improvability of enslaved Blacks and heaps scorn on masters who will not educate them in Christianity.[29]

As Hilary Beckles has shown, in the first half of the seventeenth century legal distinctions between bonded servants and slaves coexisted with "similarities on the ground."[30] In the early going, colonial development in the region was heavily reliant on European bonded labor. Between 1580 and 1775 at least 350,000 "white" servants arrived in colonial British America, comprising roughly two-thirds of all Europeans who landed in this period. On top of this came tens of thousands of prisoners and convicts sentenced to terms of seven to fourteen years of forced labor in the English colonies.[31] These indentured servants were legally defined as "commodities" in a variety of statutes and were regularly bought and sold. Arriving in Barbados, for instance, without a prior contract, the majority were sold off for the duration of their indentures. When 56 servants arrived on the *Abraham* in early 1637, they were purchased for about 500 pounds of tobacco, or roughly £7 each. This

was sale into bondage, albeit of a temporary sort. In law and in practice, indentured servants comprised forms of property that could be regularly bought and resold, which is perhaps why they were often described as "slaves" or "white slaves." Not only did masters commonly buy and sell servants during their indentures; they also put them up as stakes in card games and won or lost them as payment in lawsuits. Eric Williams rightly remarked of European servitude in the Atlantic World that, although limited, it "tended to pass into a property relation." Edmund S. Morgan made the same point: "A servant, by going to Virginia, became for a number of years a thing, a commodity with a price." As a case in point, the week that Quaker radicals Benjamin and Sarah Lay arrived in Philadelphia in 1732, a local master advertised the sale of "a very likely Servant Maid," who had four and a half years remaining on her indenture. It is easy to see why a celebrated Barbadian historian describes such service as a form of "proto-slavery."[32]

Let us pause for a moment to clarify what planters were buying when they purchased indentures. Clearly it was *guaranteed access to labor-power*, that is, to the physical and intellectual capacities for work inherent in human beings. These workers were bought as laborers, after all; the rationale for their purchase was the production of tobacco, indigo, sugar, and more for their owners—and to an extent that generated a surplus value. In a situation in which extensive supplies of labor-power were not ready for the taking, locking in access—for three, five, seven years, or more—was a prudent move. As Eric Williams put it, "Other things being equal, free men would be preferred. But in the early stages of colonial development, things are not equal." Bonded labor, he pointed out, "is not adopted as the choice over free labor; there is no choice at all."[33] Labor-power, *bonded labor-power* to be precise, was secured therefore by legally depriving servants of personal liberties while indentured.

But as European servants proved insufficient in supply (and therefore pricier), and as fewer migrants elected to come to Barbados—often choosing Jamaica or Virginia instead—planters on the island turned increasingly to the purchase of enslaved Africans. In the first phase, only the wealthiest sugar-masters in Barbados could afford African bondpeople. In the 1640s, for instance, a servant sold for about £12 while a slave cost at least £25, often more. The latter price was prohibitive for the small planter; but for elite planters, it was a compelling investment. After all, the slave buyer was likely to receive many more years of unremitting toil than the three to five years of service provided by a typical European servant. By the eighteenth century, enslaved field laborers on

the Mesopotamia estate in Jamaica contributed an average of 17.5 years of adult plantation labor.[34] Equally important, organized into large and disciplined work gangs, enslaved Africans could be compelled to new intensities of labor. Although the gang system may have generated productivity gains of "only" 20 percent initially, improvements of that order can be game-changers in a context of intense competition. And, as work regimes became more routinized, disciplined, and efficient, these initial gains were readily multiplied.[35]

With gang labor, planters were harnessing the productive powers of social cooperation.[36] In adapting to the speed and uniformity of group work through the rhythms of singing and chanting, bondpeople injected their own social-cultural forms into the work process, cooperating in ways that encouraged solidarity and self-expression. A life-affirming creative energy thus mediated the deadening weight of drudgery backed by the whip. While the planters reaped clear economic benefits from these cooperative practices, the solidarities formed in the work processes also nurtured cultures of resistance. These were no small matter, as we shall see. But in the first instance, the shift to gang work by enslaved Africans bestowed on wealthy planters more years of service per bondsperson and more output per worker in every *one* of those years.[37]

In order for the planter elite in Barbados and Virginia to shift to systematic use of enslaved Black laborers, however, the problem of supply had to be resolved. And here the wonders of "free trade" came to the rescue. In the name of economic liberty, independent dealers in human flesh overturned the Royal African Company's monopoly of the English slave trade in 1698. This victory for economic liberalism signaled a massive ramping up of African bondage—and with it the supply of enslaved labor-power to English colonies. During the quarter-century 1625–50, English ships had transported fewer than 34,000 enslaved Africans to the New World. A century later, courtesy of liberalized trade, they carried sixteen times that number—more than 550,000—to bondage in the Americas over the same length of time (1725–50). And as the supply of bonded Africans grew, prices declined. An enslaved African had cost on average about £35 in the 1630s and 1640s; by the mid-1660s the average price was about half that. Once the plantation complex was consolidated, prices would subsequently rise in tandem with the growth in labor productivity and planter profits. But in the early stage of the turn to chattel labor, this price decline was crucial.[38]

In Barbados, the transition to enslaved Black labor began in the 1640s, just before Ligon arrived. By the early 1670s, the Black popula-

TABLE 1 ESTIMATES OF BARBADOS POPULATION GROUPS, 1655 TO 1712

Year	Whites	Blacks
1655	23,000	20,000
1673	21,309	33,184
1684	19,568	46,602
1712	12,528	41,970

SOURCE: Adapted from Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*. For Dunn's sources, see Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, table 4, note 87.

tion of the island was 50 percent larger than the white. When Henry Drax wrote instructions for his estate manager in 1679, his plantation operated entirely with enslaved Black labor, except for a sprinkling of white servants assigned to specialized tasks. By that time, Drax had at least 325 African bondpeople working his 700 acres. As table 1 indicates, there were more than 33,000 bonded African workers on Barbadian estates by 1673. Nothing comparable existed throughout the colonial New World. In the Dutch colony of Berbice (now part of Guyana), by comparison, there were no more than 300 enslaved African and Amerindian laborers *in total* at the time. As late as 1760, when Barbados had more than 86,000 chattel laborers of African descent, there were at most 5,000 enslaved people in Berbice. Within the next few decades, as sugar production became concentrated in Jamaica, that British colony's slave population would surpass 250,000.[39]

In the Chesapeake, the thoroughgoing shift to bonded African labor began later and progressed more slowly. From the 1640s the wealthiest planters followed the Barbadian lead by investing in chattel slaves rather than European servants, but middling planters in Virginia did not abandon the purchase of servants until the 1720s. Nonetheless, between 1680 and 1720 Virginia's enslaved population grew twice as fast as did the free.[40] While the Chesapeake would never become a predominantly Black region, Barbados and, in its wake, the rest of the British West Indies would. Table 1 indicates the scale of the transformation. Whereas in 1655 there were still more whites than Blacks in Barbados, by 1684 Blacks outnumbered whites roughly two and a half to one.

Here again, Barbados led while others followed. Over the 120 years between 1660 and 1780, the Atlantic colonial world was steadily Africanized. In the Upper South of the United States, the African descendant share of the population grew across this period from 3.6 percent to 38.6

percent; in the Lower South, it soared from 2.0 to 41.2 percent. Meanwhile in the West Indies, the African share of the population more than doubled from 42 percent to just over 91 percent.[41] Planter capital's hunger for labor-power had Africanized the New World.

BONDED LABOR AND THE "PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION" OF CAPITAL

While chattel slavery had died out in England before the era of Atlantic colonization, its rulers were not in the least squeamish about bondage per se. For two and a half centuries of capitalist development in England (1574 to 1821) between one-third and one-half of all agricultural workers were employed as indentured servants or apprentices bound to a master. Similar arrangements encompassed apprentices in manufacturing industries and orphans and poor children bound to domestic service. In addition, thousands of sailors were compelled to labor at sea as a result of impressment and "crimping."[42] Unfree labor was thus anything but foreign to English values and practices. But in conditions of colonial labor scarcity it was dramatically intensified.

The more intense servitude of New World colonies owed something to the pressures of debt arrangements. Many European workers departing for the New World agreed to three to seven years of indenture to an employer who would pay for their transportation, room, and board with the promise of a lump sum payment (in wages or land) once their term expired. The physical body of the servant—as a repository of labor-power—was the collateral for the debts incurred for their passage. Elements of debt bondage, absent in England, became central to the New World relation between servant and master. For this reason, a master's property rights were more extensive in the colonies and more harshly enforced. Servants could be sold and laws against running away were repeatedly tightened—frequently to the point that servants required passes to leave their masters' farms. Such rules blurred, but did not dissolve, the line of demarcation between servants and slaves. And since European servants and African slaves often worked alongside each other on plantations in Barbados, Virginia, and beyond in the seventeenth century, the status differences between European servants and enslaved Africans could seem fuzzy.[43]

To be sure, the distinction between temporary and indefinite bondage was clear in principle.[44] But the "similarities on the ground" described by Beckles involved overlapping (but not identical) conditions

of servility and legal unfreedom; treatment as commodities; limits on mobility; and subjection to the whip. Moreover, European convicts often shared the condition of being shipped across the Atlantic in shackles. Consequently, social and legal distinctions among bonded workers were not always hard and fast in the early going. And where elites tried to codify these differences, the modern notion of *race* was not yet ready to hand. This is why Ligon's terminology wobbles when describing the conditions of life and work of the island's "servants," sometimes treating it as a single group that includes "both Christians, and slaves."[45] We see a similar instability in the 1620 Virginia Census, which categorized the thirty-two Black people in the colony as "not Christians in the Service of the English." Definition by negation ("not Christians") lacked the content that later racial doctrine would supply. Fifty years later, Virginia's Act XII of 1670 continued to contrast "Negro" not with "White," but with "Christian."[46] Lacking the modern notion of "race," the predominant line of demarcation was religious. To be sure, this carried strong connotations of superiority and inferiority. But because some Blacks were free and many Europeans were in indentured servitude, distinctions between freedom and unfreedom did not straightforwardly map onto strict "racial" differences. A 1664 document from a committee of the English government's Council on Foreign Plantations, for instance, continued to conflate servants and slaves, proclaiming that "Servants are either Blacks or Whites." The same ambiguities ran through everyday vernaculars in Virginia in the 1660s, where people "employed words like 'slave' and 'servant' loosely."[47] Because of its familiarity to English people, indentured servitude provided elements of the initial model for chattel slavery. But only *some* elements.

Taking the case of Virginia, as indentured service was codified from the 1630s, penalties were introduced for running away, clandestine marriage, fornication, and trading without permission. Until sometime in the 1660s, servants could be punished by whipping, branding, cropping of hair, and additional years of bondage for such transgressions. Indeed, the infamous "Cage" in Bridgetown, Barbados, served in the 1650s principally as a jail for indentured servants and unruly sailors, only later morphing into a place of confinement for runaway slaves. In addition, hereditary servitude was frequently imposed upon the illegitimate offspring of European servants. Because of these shared features, a legal regime of racialized chattel slavery seemed at first to have more to do with the *permanence* of bondage than with its everyday features. Company officials in Rhode Island informed settlers in 1638, for

instance, that Blacks could be held "as perpetual servants." A 1664 statement by a committee of England's Council on Foreign Plantations categorized Africans in identical terms.[48]

Further complicating matters was the fact that, as Eric Williams remarked, in the early going, "Unfree labor in the New World was brown, white, black, and yellow."[49] The multiracial composition of bonded labor rendered racial formation quite intricate. Let us recall here the extent of Indigenous enslavement in the Americas, which ran into the millions of people. In 1636 the Governor and Council of Barbados directed "that *Negroes* and *Indians*, that came here to be sold, should serve for life, unless a contract was before made to the contrary."[50] Like indentured service, slavery was not yet identified exclusively with Black bondage. But that would come. And Ligon was present for its birth.

SWEET NEGOTIATION: SUGAR, PROFIT, AND GANG LABOR

In a crucial section of his *History*, Ligon presents two detailed diagrams of an *ingenio*, or sugar mill, and a similarly thorough diagram of a sugar curing house. Having mapped three dozen elements of the means of production, he provides a detailed anatomy of the labor process. Then he estimates total output and average profit to show how a wealthy planter might "climb to a high degree of Wealth and opulence, in this sweet Negotiation of Sugar."[51] While Ligon's description of the production process has been exceedingly helpful to historians, the economic calculations were decidedly more innovative.

Ligon's exercises in *political arithmetic*, as it would come to be known, commence with an assessment of the total value of the annual export product of the island. He suggests that the total size of Barbados is 392 square miles and then estimates that about two-thirds of that area is in the hands of sugar planters. He next calculates that three-fifths of the space owned by planters consists of wood, pasture, and provision grounds. The remainder, he assumes, is devoted to producing sugar. Having arrived at that estimated area (a little over 55,000 square acres), he posits that it will produce 3,000 pounds of sugar per acre on average. Next, he asks what the value of this output would be if it were cured and refined into white sugar, deducting one-quarter of the product as waste. He arrives at a total value of over £3 million on the local market over a twenty-month production cycle. Should planters also transport and market their sugar in England, he asserts, the value will double (to

over £6 million) on the English market.[52] Having assessed the value of the export product per sugar cycle, Ligon meanders for a bit before turning to the question of the average profit per plantation. No longer is he focused on aggregate output; his concern is now with the *rate* of return on capital invested.

Ligon declares that the total startup cost of a 500-acre sugar plantation (including a mill and curing house) with appropriate numbers of "Servants, Slaves, Horses, Camels, Cattle" is £14,000. However, with judicious investment, this cost can be carried with an initial capital of £3,000. Roughly a third of the latter sum will cover food, clothing, and shoes for servants and slaves, along with better-quality items for the planter; another third will purchase tools and utensils; while the final third (actually slightly more than that) can purchase a stock of imported goods, upon which a quick profit can be turned if sold as soon as the planter arrives on the island. That final third (and the profit earned on it) can then be reinvested to finance the overall costs (£14,000) of the initial cycle of sugar production. Once the first yield of sugar is sold, the estate will become forever self-financing—profitably so. Indeed, Ligon calculates that the initial investment of £3,000 will yield a yearly revenue of £8,866. In a detailed table of costs and earnings, he proposes that an additional £1,349 will be necessary to maintain the "Christian Servants," replace worn clothing, and replenish the supply of "Negroes, Horses, and Cattle" as they perish. This leaves a "clear profit" of £7,516 per annum. As staggering as that rate of profit appears—the initial investment of £3,000 growing by two and a half times within a year—Ligon insists that planters like James Drax and Thomas Modyford experienced just such fabulous returns.[53]

Ligon's political arithmetic of plantation profit signified the development of cost accounting as a means of measuring returns on investment. In contrast with William Petty, the famous political arithmetician of the 1670s, Ligon may have had no *theory* of profit, but he had sound intuition about the matter. In a digressive comment, he instructs planters to be attentive to "the poor Negroes . . . by the labor of whose hands, our profit is brought in." Shortly before concluding his text, he further describes the social organization of this labor. Remarking that Barbadian overseers are responsible for supervision of "several Gangs, some ten, some twenty, more or less," he at last mentions the innovation that made Barbados the pacesetter for planter capitalism: the strict organization of gangs of workers moving in lockstep through the fields under the watch of whip-carrying overseers. It is probably true that the gang system of the 1640s was still rudimentary at the time. And it would be

several decades before most Barbadian planters built their own mills, thus truly "integrating" their estates. Yet, Ligon's text makes clear that the gang labor system was emergent. More than this, Ligon clearly delineates basic divisions of labor within the workforce. The overseer, he urges, must send "some to seed, some to plant, some to fell wood, some to cleave it, some to saw it into boards, some to fetch home, some to cut Canes, others to attend the Ingenio, Boiling-house, Still-house, and Curing-house; some for the Harvest, to cut the Maize . . . others to gather Provisions."[54]

As the plantation complex matured in subsequent decades, the gang labor system would be intricately refined. In his 1679 plantation "Instructions," Henry Drax, one of the wealthiest Barbadian planters of his age, indicates that his workforce was organized into gangs. But the document contains little detail in this regard. Not so when William Belgrove republished Drax's treatise in 1755 as an appendix to his own *Treatise upon Husbandry or Planting*. Here we find a lengthy section on gang labor and its management:

> The best Way that I know of to prevent Idleness, and to make the Negroes do their Work properly, will be upon the change of Work, constantly to Gang all the Negroes in the Plantations in the Time of Planting. All the Men Negroes into two Gangs, the ablest and best by themselves for Holeing and the stronger Work, and the more ordinary Negroes in a Gang for Dunging, &c. The Women Negroes also into two Gangs as before, and the lesser Negroes into two Gangs, the least to be followed by some careful old Woman, who must use them with Gentleness. Out of these six Gangs of Negroes must the Carters, Stillers, Curing House Negroes, Cooks, Lookers after Stock, Watchers of Provisions, &c. be drawn. Your Under-Overseer must constantly have a List of the Gang under his particular Care, that he may be able to give a particular Account of every one, whether Sick or how employed.[55]

By the eighteenth century, gangs on most large estates were assigned to specialized aspects of the work process—clearing, holing, planting, weeding, cutting, manuring, and so on. As for the internal organization of work within each gang, this was captured in William Dickson's *Letters on Slavery* (1789), based on firsthand observation of Barbadian sugar estates. Describing the process of cane holing, Dickson writes, "The holes are dug, with hoes, by the slaves, in a row, with the driver at one end, to preserve the line. They begin and finish a row of these holes as nearly as, at the same instants, as possible, so that this *equal* task must be performed, in *the same time,* by a number of people who, it is *next to impossible*, should all be *equally strong* and dexterous." Dick-

son then shifts attention to the work of "turning dung," or manuring the fields, declaring that this too "is another equal task, to be performed in an equal time, by people of unequal strength."[56]

This captures the distinctiveness of the integrated plantation—the standardization of tasks, the regimentation of labor, the imposition of time discipline. The *same* work will be accomplished in the *same* amount of time by all members of a work-gang notwithstanding differences in size, strength, age, gender, dexterity, stamina, health. Increasingly, fields were laid out in carefully measured geometric units so that work could be routinized, and output predictably calculated in advance. The pace and time of work had become abstract standards, to which each member of a work gang was to conform. In this respect, bonded laborers really had become homogeneous—mere embodiments of human labor-power in the abstract. As this model became generalized, particularly after 1750, Atlantic planters came to operate within the horizons of modern business practices governed by the quantifying metrics of commodification. Not only were their factories-in-the-field among some of the largest workplaces in the world at the time; they also operated according to minute calculations of tasks, coordinated work routines, and detailed accounting, all expressed in the ledgers of profit and loss.[57]

Sidney Mintz rightly observed that the combination of 100 or more workers toiling in fields, mills, boiling houses, curing houses, and distilleries (each requiring unique tools, machines, and equipment) made the sugar plantation a multidivisional enterprise in which calibrated inputs of labor and raw material flowed through a sequentially coordinated process. Sugar cultivation and processing necessitate detailed integration of tasks and the tightest time discipline. Cane had to be converted into juice within hours of its cutting. Boiling and distilling were closely coordinated and supervised. The intricate organization of the workforce, as Mintz noted, allowed the planter and his underlings to treat labor abstractly, as if workers were "interchangeable units."[58] By the early nineteenth century, the optimal sugar estate had in the range of 200–300 bondpeople; the largest had considerably more. Even economists steeped in a neoclassical tradition discerned that the scale and the standardization of plantation labor resembled nothing so much as a modern factory: "Black plantation agriculturalists labored under a regimen that was more like a modern assembly line than was true of the routine in many of the factories of the antebellum period . . . the great plantations were the first large, scientifically managed business enterprises."[59]

Whoever seeks to analyze Atlantic slavery must, therefore, come to terms with the sugar plantation. Historians of US slavery, drawn to the centrality of cotton planting there, often lose sight of the fact that two-thirds of enslaved Africans in the New World worked in sugar fields.[60] For most of plantation history, sugar was the most lucrative product of New World slave production; it was the business that consumed the lives and labor-power of the greatest numbers of bondpeople. Not only were the classic methods of large-scale commodity production by slaves first invented in the sugar fields; they were created on the estates of *English* colonies—first in Barbados, then Jamaica. This is not accidental. Just as England came to capitalism first, so its colonies pioneered fully capitalist slavery. In the decades after 1750, French colonialism increasingly adopted the British model, with some unique inflections. But the British Empire led the way and constructed the largest system of colonial slavery. By 1807, two-thirds of all bondpeople in the Caribbean lived and worked in British colonies. On top of this, plantation sugar was always a more highly capitalized and mechanized enterprise than was cotton. Whereas nineteenth-century Southern cotton planters invested about $1.60 per acre on farm implements, Louisiana's sugar masters spent $20 on machinery for each improved acre.[61] Cotton would have its turn, becoming indispensable to the rise of industrial capitalism in England. But any comprehensive account of New World slavery must begin with the sugar plantation and, therefore, with Barbados. By 1670, that small island produced two-thirds of all the sugar consumed in England. And when uncultivated land there ran out and the cultivated area degraded, Jamaica was waiting in the wings. As West Indian sugar shipments to Britain quadrupled in weight—and in monetary value—over the period 1700–1775, the enslaved population of Jamaica soared, reaching 226,000 in 1788, up from just 10,000 a century earlier.[62] All fueled by bonded Black laborers working in gangs.

BLACK LABOR, WHITE SUGAR

The economic accomplishments of the plantation rested on new forms of racialized class domination. But this was an emergent racial formation, not yet a fully constituted one. For all his colonial elitism, Ligon has no doubt, for instance, that Blacks are capable of conscience, loyalty, and religion. Indeed, speaking about those of African descent, Ligon says, "There are as honest, faithful, and conscionable people amongst them, as amongst those of *Europe*, or any other part of the

world." If "race" was an emergent concept at the time, Ligon's *History* demonstrates that it had not yet crystallized.[63] But as planters turned to whip-driven gang labor, they entered, largely unconsciously, into the business of constructing race. They tried, of course, to impose draconian conditions of work and life on English servants. But the latter defended inherited customs of work, leisure, and standards of life. As Richard Dunn observed, since "the Barbados masters were treating their servants more brutally than at home during the 1640s and 1650s," it was small surprise that "the servants were behaving more rebelliously than at home." In Barbados, this was exacerbated by the large number of Irish prisoners among the servant population. Already hostile to English rule, Irish Catholic servants were unruly and rebellious. Indeed, they rose up in the late 1640s and again in 1655, 1656, and 1657, prompting the colonial regime to institute an Irish pass system along with severe punishments. Most ominously, the Irish worked and lived in closer contact with enslaved Africans than did any other group, and the two often rebelled together. One of the first maroon settlements in Barbados, for instance, comprised a mixed community of about thirty enslaved Africans and Irish servants. In reaction, planters disavowed use of white bonded laborers. The Barbadian population of European servants plummeted from roughly 13,000 in 1652 to 2,300 three decades later, while imports of enslaved Africans just kept soaring, reaching about 45,000 by 1680. In 1679, Henry Drax advised his estate manager that where "white Servants" were concerned, "the fewer the better." As we have seen in table 1, the African share of the island's population jumped from 1.8 percent in 1630 to over 65 percent in 1680. And as the population of African descent grew, it was increasingly subjected to the strictures of "race," which were regularly intensified in response to rebellion. During the final decades of the eighteenth century, for instance—between Tacky's Revolt of 1760 in Jamaica and the outbreak of revolution in Saint Domingue in the 1790s—racial boundaries in French and British colonies and the newly formed United States were more tightly drawn in the idioms of bio-racism.[64]

Racial capitalism in the fields also required new structures of command. There were, however, few precedents for coordinating, regulating, and disciplining one hundred or more laborers at a single worksite. An exception in this regard was the coercion practiced on ships and in the armed forces. So planters began recruiting individuals with naval and military backgrounds to enforce the domination vital to the functioning of racialized gang labor. To turn an acceptable profit on their

investments in bonded Africans, planters urgently needed to solve "the problem of discipline through the application of terror." Who better to rely on than former soldiers and sailors who had not only been subjected to corporal discipline, but who had also *administered* it? Those discharged from military service in the aftermath of England's civil war of the 1640s provided a large pool of such recruits. And after the Glorious Revolution launched a century of war with France, the supply of young men with military experience seemed endless. On average, a typical soldier in the British Army during the Seven Years War (1756–63) witnessed a flogging of fifty to one hundred lashes at least every other day and a minimum of one execution every month. If plantations were to be prison labor camps, recruits like these were primed to enact disciplinary violence. In 1700 alone Barbadian planters recruited 2,000 former soldiers as militia tenants, many of whom would serve as overseers.[65]

The opening sentence of South Carolina's "Act for the Better Governing of Negroes and Slaves" (1712) declared, "the plantations and estates of this Province cannot be well and sufficiently managed and rendered useful, without the labour and service of negroes and other slaves."[66] And that labor and service was subtended by a regime of class and racial violence.

CHAPTER 2

George Washington

Land Grabber, Slave Hunter, Bourgeois Planter

Only the rise of capitalist agriculture produces the book-keeping farmer.

—Karl Marx

On February 5, 1760, four enslaved carpenters were hewing logs and sawing them into planks when George Washington came upon them at his Virginia plantation. Unhappy with their output the previous day, Washington sat down, pulled out his watch, and timed their work. Having determined how much of each task they could accomplish per hour, he drew up new daily quotas for them.[1] Not for the first time, Washington's bondpeople had been subjected to the metrics of *abstract time* regulated by the clock. As mechanical devices, clocks provide a purely quantitative temporal measure: every second, minute, hour, or day is identical with every other, mere quantities of time. Most of us do not measure our lives in that way. We are intensely conscious of the qualitative differences between an hour spent at work and an hour devoted to gathering with loved ones. We know that minutes spent singing, laughing, crying with a companion, or walking through a forest are radically different from those spent performing tasks for an employer, or waiting to be called on at a government office.

Concrete time is radically qualitative. It has to do, first, with human experience as it relates to the rhythms of the natural world (sunrise and sunset, the cycle of the seasons, childhood and old age, and so on). It has to do also with the social activities organized around these cycles, such as planting, harvesting, seasonal festivities, the celebrations associated with birth, the rituals that mark a death, the recreation that occurs

after sunset. The time of capitalist labor and life, however, is profoundly different. It is "dead time," the time of endless repetition that, as lived at work, is experienced as theft from the moments of real life. In abstract time moments are identical temporal units, bound in linear succession, and embodied in clocks, bells, and horns. North Carolina bondman Allen Parker conveyed just these distinctions when he recalled that for a nighttime dance, enslaved people "would gather at the appointed time, which would be about eight o'clock as told by the evening star, for the slaves had no watches or clocks, and consequently were obliged to depend upon the sun, moon, and stars and other things in nature to tell the time, except of course that the hours of labor and meal times were regulated by the watch or clock of the master."[2] The time of communal life was regulated by the "sun, moon, and stars," while that of plantation labor was governed by the clock. Washington's carpenters—whose names were George, Tom, Mike, and Billy—experienced just this domination of abstract time when their master sat down that day with his watch in hand.[3]

Washington was obsessed with time as a currency for what others owed him. He routinely claimed to own the time of those he employed. In a letter to three of his overseers, the then president declared, "Your time is paid for by me." To deprive him of it, he continued, "is worse even than robbing my purse." Indeed, when a gardener left his employ in 1774, Washington made sure to deduct a share of the wages owed due to "lost time." Similarly, on New Year's Day 1789, he warned his estate manager to be vigilant in extracting work from his bondpeople, reminding him that "lost time is never regained." His nephew, Lund Washington, who served as the first president's plantation manager, fully absorbed his uncle's reasoning. "It is a maxim with me," he declared, "that he who receives the wages of another, hath no time which he, in right can call his own." Here the capitalist logic of appropriation of the labor of another—an appropriative power acquired through money—is extended to time itself.[4]

So thoroughly had Washington imbibed the liberal idea of time as currency that his 1768 diary opened with the heading, "Where & How My Time is Spent." But most striking is the way he calculated the monetary value of a slave's working day. He routinely measured the exchange value of slave output in order to calculate an overseer's share of a crop. In doing so, Washington monetized labor time for accounting purposes. And he was well aware of what he was doing. In a 1799 letter to the managers of three of his estates, he railed against "loss of labour, or of time," instructing them in the principle of "time producing labour, and

labour money." Labor/time/money: these are the equivalences at the heart of capitalist commodity production.[5]

MASTERED BY THE CLOCK

Three days after that 1799 letter, Washington wrote to the manager of his home estate at Mount Vernon. Urging that his plantations should be organized according to a "system," Washington stated, "Every thing should run like clock work." In trying to make his estates run like clockwork—and on *clock-time*—Washington was not alone. Slaveholders in the antebellum South were, as one historian puts it, "one of the few agricultural peoples in the nineteenth century world to embrace clock time." In fact, ownership of clocks and watches was as widespread in the South as it was in the North. The clock joined the whip as an indispensable technology of plantation discipline.[6]

Under the regime of abstract time, work becomes a strictly regulated quantity of interchangeable temporal units (minutes, hours, days, weeks). As Georg Lukacs astutely noted, within the temporal order of capitalism, "time sheds its qualitative, variable, flowing nature; it freezes into an exactly delimited, quantifiable continuum filled with quantifiable 'things' (the reified, mechanically objectivized 'performance' of the worker, totally separated from his total personality); in short, it becomes space." Capitalist work discipline, regulated by clock-time, thus represents a rupture with all "premodern" temporalities. Ulrich B. Phillips may have believed that in the Old South "the strokes of a tall clock in the hall were of little more concern than the silent shadow on the sundial outdoors." But the evidence says otherwise. As a productive enterprise—which was its central purpose—the large plantation was governed by abstract clock-time.[7]

It is not just the presence of clock-time that distinguishes the capitalist mode of production, but rather the fusion of "clock-time and processes of capitalist value formation." Time *is* money (value). This does not imply the disappearance of other dimensions of natural and lived time. Temporality in capitalist society is always multilayered and hypercomplex. But in capitalism clock-time comes to dominate the rhythms and patterns of everyday life; it imposes its abstract temporality on a plethora of life-making activities. Other temporal relations coexist and even contest the imposition of clock-time. Agrarian capitalism, for instance, must adapt to and integrate a variety of natural temporalities—such as seed germination or fermentation of bacteria or yeast—if

it is to succeed. But, so long as capitalist production prevails, these non-clock temporalities do not overturn the dominion of clock-time.[8]

We should not be surprised that clock-time was more prominent in the plantations of the British Atlantic than in other regions of New World slavery. After all, planter capitalism was most precocious there. By at least the 1730s, some large planters in the British West Indies were using clocks to regiment work in their fields, mills, and curing houses, as George Washington would do three decades later. Washington may have been ahead of most Virginia planters of his day in this regard. But former Virginia slave John Brown reported that in the 1830s his master would set two or three of his strongest field hands to a task and "would stand with his watch in hand observing their movements whilst they hoed or picked. Whatever [the fastest] did, within a given time, would be multiplied by a certain rule, for the day's work, and every man's task would be staked out accordingly." North Carolina bondman Moses Grandy described how the overseer on Enoch Sawyer's estate "stood with his watch in his hand" as Grandy and other field workers went about their labors. Southern planters also shared time studies of enslaved work. In 1830, *the Southern Agriculturalist* published detailed excerpts from the journal of a sugar planter that included these observations, among others: "Dec. 10th: Extracted with my mill and one pony, 65 gallons of juice in 28 minutes." Or, "Dec. 28th . . . Measured one gallon of juice which I reduced to sugar in 64 minutes." These exercises in time and motion study were part of a shared planter culture across the US South. In contrast, clock-time had barely penetrated plantation life in the French colony of Martinique in this era. Even the use of bells to regulate the workday was rare there. On plantations throughout the antebellum South, however, bells and horns blared wake-up times, start times, mealtimes, the end of the workday, time for lights out, and more. "Bells and horns! Bells for this, horns for that! All we knowed was go and come by the sound of bells," recalled former Louisiana bondman Charley Williams. We find another business technology critical to the planter quest for profit at this time: the account book. And here too Washington was once more in the van of gentry improvers.[9]

ACCOUNTING FOR SLAVERY

Washington began keeping detailed plantation records in the 1760s—dealing with field use, seeds, tools, labor inputs, and crop yields. He expected the same from his plantation managers during the more than

eight years (1775–83) he was away serving as commander of the Continental Army. Having divided his Mount Vernon estate into multiple plantations (initially five farms, but the number grew as he acquired more land), he demanded comprehensive reports from each of his farm managers. By 1785 he had developed account books in which his managers were to record all expenditures of labor allocated to a range of tasks, from ditch digging to fence building, and from planting to milling. As years went by, Washington standardized his overseers' reports—all of which treated enslaved task-days as interchangeable. Washington's plantation accounts were essentially labor logs, abstracts of hours worked and the corresponding outputs. By 1789, he was receiving a weekly report in double-entry bookkeeping style, with each overseer being debited for the total number of potential working days of his labor force per week and credited for labor actually performed. Pennsylvania senator William Maclay wrote in 1790 of Washington's plantation that "not a day's Work, but is noted What, by Whom, and Where done." In drawing up a 1793 description of requirements for a farm manager, Washington emphasized the ability "to keep an Account." As we have seen, Washington was also converting labor inputs into monetary units.[10]

Again, Washington may have been an extreme stickler for detail, but he was far from exceptional. Chesapeake planter Robert Goldsborough began keeping two ledgers in 1687; by 1703 he had developed detailed account books documenting expenditures of labor and its output. Fellow planter Richard Tilghman was also using double-entry bookkeeping to keep his accounts. As Caitlin Rosenthal has argued, slaveholders in the southern United States were probably more obsessed with measuring and increasing labor productivity than were northern manufacturers. Across the South, masters used a variety of journals and record books with an array of forms for daily, monthly, and quarterly measures of output, productivity, costs, profits, capital assets, and more. Work logs that tracked expenditures of labor and corresponding outputs were used in the British Caribbean from the 1740s and were available in printed form there by the 1780s. During the nineteenth century this became a norm among large numbers of Southern planters too. In 1852, one Southern newspaper featured an article bearing the injunction, "Keep a Plantation Record." And thousands of planters did just that. Of standardized record books available for purchase, the most widely used was Thomas Affleck's *Plantation Record and Account Book*, whose version for cotton plantations included fifteen distinct forms. Affleck's journals, which claimed annual sales of two thousand,

went through eight editions up to the Civil War. To be sure, the proliferation of detailed accounting in the southern United States was especially marked during the "second slavery" of the nineteenth century, to be discussed in chapter 10. But this mania for accounting merely mimicked long-standing practices of the most farsighted gentry capitalists from Virginia to Jamaica.[11]

At the heart of all this accounting was the bottom line: profit. Planter obsession with seed strains, tools, slave rations, expenditures on animals and barns, the number and age distribution of their slaves, crop outputs per acre, and labor productivity all revolved around returns to capital, for this is what made economic survival and accumulation possible. The detailed accounts of Rice C. Ballard, for instance, showed that his five co-owned plantations produced 2,500 bales of cotton on average each year in the decade before the Civil War for a total personal profit of $330,000. Mississippi planter Benjamin Roach Jr. also averaged 2,500 bales of cotton on his five wholly owned plantations during the 1850s, netting an annual profit of $90,000.[12] Louisiana slaveowner Bennett H. Barrow's dictum that a plantation ought to "be considered as a piece of machinery" exemplified the planter desire to maximize its efficiency. Similarly, Virginian William Byrd II explained that the art of plantation management was "to keep all my people to their duty, to set all the springs in motion, and to make everyone draw his equal share to carry the machine forward." After visiting Washington on his estates, one US senator wrote of his management style, "not a days Work, but is noted What, by Whom, and Where done, not a Cow calves or Ewe drops her lamb, but is registered. deaths &ca. Whether accidental or by the hands of the Butcher, all minuted. Thus the etiquette and arrangement of an army is preserved on his farm." Yet, as one biographer has suggested, it may well be that, rather than transfer military discipline to his estates, Washington transferred disciplinary practices from his plantations to the army.[13] Slaveowner account books, with their pages upon pages of tables, were the field manuals of the plantation machine.

Plantation accounts were also exercises in abstraction and quantification. Hours, days, and months of labor were reduced to a common scale so that they might be aggregated and compared. This was the essence of daily picking quotas set for slaves in sugar or cotton fields, as it was with quotas for hoeing or planting. When gangs were subjected to group quotas, the individual work of a bondperson merged into the labor of a group. Of course, the very act of purchasing slaves involved similar arts of abstraction. Slaves were bought and sold on uniform price scales.

Slave traders and planters used abstractions like a *prime hand*, sometimes called an *extra* (generally a healthy young male field hand) as a standard measure. Some used a five-point scale based on quarter-point measures meant to quantify differences among bondpeople. All other human attributes of enslaved persons—age, height, weight, gender, healthy appearance, strength, reproductive potential, and so on—were then translated into fractions of a prime hand along a single metric: price. Quality thus became quantity, the very reduction intrinsic to commodification. "The muscular arm of a field hand and the sharp eye of a seamstress" were measured as units of the same thing—a potential quantum of racialized labor-power—so that each would yield a market price. "That was commodification: the distant and the different translated into money value and resolved into a single scale of relative prices."[14]

It is perhaps fitting that the plantation account books for a major Jamaican landowner, Henry Dawkins, enumerated his chattel slaves under the heading "An abstract of the foregoing list of Negroes." Not only was this an "abstract" in the conventional sense—a brief summary account—it was also an exercise *in* abstraction. When Dawkins's attorney identified 1,164 enslaved people across several estates in 1779, he specified the age, gender, and skills within this workforce in order to calculate the total labor-power available to his employer. This exercise in quantifying total labor-power facilitated estimates of expected output per "hand." But it was crucial to overcome "negligence of calculation" if slaveowners were to translate this labor-power into "a fair or ordinary interest or profit," advised a contributor to *The Southern Planter* in 1859. [15] To this end, planter journals offered detailed information on everything from seed strains, tools and machinery, crop rotation, slave management, commodity outputs, average prices, and profits. But what mattered ultimately was the relation of all of these costs to the output of labor—and so it was the latter that had to be tracked most assiduously. On John Newton's enormous Barbados estates, the most detailed records were the labor logs, which accounted for every unit of labor deployed. It is no overstatement to suggest, therefore, that it was on the plantation that "modern labor management . . . was invented." Alongside labor logs were "breeding books" that recorded every birth as a prospective unit of labor-power. All of this data could be integrated into an annual "abstract" that made the complex, multifaceted operation of plantations legible in a matter of pages. And this information could then be tabulated in relation to the prices of plantation commodities. Like thousands of others, Henry Clark, a medium-sized Virginia planter, kept tabs

on prices for tobacco in London, Liverpool, Dublin, Antwerp, Rotterdam, Marseilles, Bordeaux, and other European cities. New World planters responded to world market prices by reorganizing crop mixes, field work, and labor quotas. In so doing, they merged techniques of scientific agriculture with modern management and accounting.[16]

FACTORIES IN THE FIELD

Watching planters use timepieces and account books, we are witness to the violence of abstraction that accompanies capitalism. Through technologies of timing, measuring, surveying, and accounting, things were reduced to uniform numerical and geometrical standards, be they acres of land, units of labor, or quantities of money. These abstractions are what make market metrics and exchanges cognitively possible, which is why *political arithmetic* played so central a role in the intellectual revolutions that accompanied the rise of bourgeois society. For Francis Bacon, the road to practical knowledge required that things be "numbered, weighed, measured, and defined."[17] And the planter journals produced by Thomas Affleck and others were just such exercises in quantification, providing a social epistemology of commodity economy.

Among Marx's great insights is the recognition that all of these intellectual abstractions express social practices of *real abstraction*. In exchanging commodities, market actors must abstract from the concrete, qualitative differences among things so that they can be valued as quantities of a single thing—money. Pounds of cotton, barrels of sugar, ounces of wine, so many coats, yards of linen, and haircuts all become interchangeable. And this means that the labors involved in producing them—cotton picking, sugar refining, wine making, weaving, sewing, and haircutting—must also be considered interchangeable; they too must be treated as units of the same thing: human labor in the abstract.[18] Because they render commodities commensurable, along with the labors that went into producing them, capitalist markets operate on the basis of real acts of abstraction that have profoundly social-material effects: determining what sells, who gets hired and paid (and at what prices), who starves. Real abstraction governs the production of commodities—and of life. What matters in capitalism is that the worker should perform routinized actions at the standardized pace for the predetermined quantity of hours. This is why, under the conditions of alienated labor appropriate to capitalism, "Time is everything, man is nothing; he is at most time's carcass. Quality no longer matters. Quantity alone decides everything: hour for hour, day for day."[19]

British Atlantic planters, particularly after 1750, operated according to these abstract metrics of commodified production. They managed their estates according to detailed calculations of tasks, coordinated work regimes, and cost accounting, all expressed in the ledgers of profit and loss. In this respect, George Washington was exemplary. He persisted in getting more hours per year out of his bondpeople and in trying to speed up every work-hour they performed. In 1786, we find him setting out detailed guidelines to increase the pace of cradling, raking, and binding of wheat on his estate.[20] He also sought to keep his bondpeople equally busy across the calendar, notwithstanding the natural rhythms of the agricultural year. In the Chesapeake, planters had been diversifying productive activities from about the 1670s. In the tobacco areas, they started growing wheat as a secondary crop; increasingly it became a primary one. The gentry elite also added livestock farming, fisheries, timber cutting, fruit orchards, cider making, and the growing and milling of corn and small grains. Some moved into the textile industry, building mills fueled by slave labor. Within a generation or two it was widely appreciated that diversification of this sort smoothed out the slack periods in labor utilization, keeping bondpeople more fully active throughout the year. On top of this, planters scheduled clearing of land, manuring of fields, ditching, and the building and repair of fences, barns, carriages, wagons, and roads for otherwise slow periods. Records from the Mount Airy plantation in Virginia illustrate how "the estate manager and his seven overseers effectively synchronized the individual labors of some 200 farm and craft workers to keep an elaborate enterprise in continuous motion." This was done by way of task rotation and the hiring of extra bondpeople as needed. In the Cotton Kingdom of the Deep South, the growing of corn and cowpeas and the raising of livestock helped maintain the intensity of labor throughout the year, as did seasonal clearing of unutilized land. Even on supposedly "monocultural" sugar estates in Barbados and Jamaica, we find workers raising secondary crops, like coffee and cotton, as well as tending livestock and cutting wood. By the middle of the eighteenth century, it was common for large sugar estates to have diversified into "dual pen/sugar plantation" units in which livestock farming and raising of food crops figured as significant secondary activities. Pen workers could be, and were, regularly rotated to sugar production during the harvest period. Similarly, rice in Cuba and corn, mandioca, and beef in Brazil flourished as secondary commodities in the nineteenth century.[21] The idea that enslaved workers were idle or underutilized for considerable periods of time does

not accord with the records—particularly when slave rental is added to the picture, as we shall see.

Early on, Washington switched to wheat as a primary cash crop, although he never fully abandoned tobacco. Over the years, he also built a state-of-the-art merchant mill, developed commercial fishing on the Potomac River, launched a distillery, became a livestock breeder, and experimented with more than sixty different crops. By creating a multicropping estate, Washington regularly adjusted the allocation of labor across his farms to maximize hours worked and profits returned. Idleness was combatted at every turn. Like planters across the British Atlantic world, he also assigned his workers to weaving, grinding, tending orchards, and repairing and building fences, canals, ditches, barns, and housing. Such diversification increased the adaptability of enslaved labor-power. South Carolina cotton planter Michael Gramling, for instance, had little problem shifting field workers into manufacture of mudsills (or sill plates) for a local railway company. A British factory inspector quoted by Marx claimed that "moments are the elements of profit." Washington excelled at maximizing those moments. By one calculation, his bondpeople worked more than 3,190 hours annually, roughly 200 hours more than the average enslaved worker in the antebellum South, and approximately the same number of hours worked by industrial wage laborers at the time.[22]

BOURGEOIS SLAVEOWNERS

It should now be evident that George Washington, like most members of the British Atlantic planter gentry, bears little resemblance to Eugene Genovese's cartoon version of "pre-capitalist, quasi-aristocratic landowners," the nineteenth century's "closest thing to feudal lords," ensconced in a stagnant and "irrational" economic system.[23] Genovese specialized in sociological abstraction. In defiance of its title, his *Political Economy of Slavery* is bereft of political-economic analysis. Marx, on the other hand, knew a thing or two about the latter. And he hit the mark when he noted that, by the middle of the eighteenth century, US planters operated "in a calculated and calculating system." The supervision of gang labor, the detailed organization of work processes, flexible allocation of laborers throughout the year, the persistent recordkeeping, the use of clocks and timepieces, the close attention to prices and costs of production—all of this was indeed "calculated and calculating." Peter Coclanis is surely right when he says that "agricultural units organized

under the gang system more closely resembled factories in the field, and everything that this nineteenth-century metaphor connoted."[24] We are dealing, it follows, with *bourgeois planters* whose agrarian enterprises were commodity-producing farms fueled by bonded labor. Like England's landed gentry, the great planters of the British colonial world had become "a superbly successful and self-confident capitalist class."[25] This was evident in their embrace of "English husbandry," the system of scientific agriculture practiced on "improved" capitalist farms.

Washington's fellow Virginians Landon and Charles Carter, heirs to a gentry dynasty in the colony, were early converts to English improved husbandry. Like Washington, they also sought to diversify plantation production by adding distilling, grain milling, manufactures, and sawmilling to their operations. Washington himself established a nailery, a weaving shop, a fishery, and a gristmill on his estate. In this, he was following the lead of the first generation of wealthy Virginia planters such as Robert "King" Carter (1663–1732), who oversaw blacksmith shops, flour mills, iron foundries, and textile weaving operations on his estates. Carter's grandson, Robert "Councillor" Carter (1728–1804), had thirty-three outbuildings on his Westmoreland County plantation, including a mill, brewery, ironworks, wheat silo, and spinning center. Future president and fellow Virginian James Madison (1751–1836) featured a forge, a wheelwright shop, a carpentry, and a turner's shop on his Montpelier estate. Basic manufacturing, even if tied to handicraft forms, was thus integral to planter capitalism.[26]

Washington's greatest innovations were agrarian, however. He was arguably the most celebrated US agriculturalist of his age, famous for his improvements in the areas of crop rotation, seed strains, fertilization, livestock breeding, farm implements, threshing machines, automated milling, and more. Washington avidly studied the literature of British agricultural improvement. Among his readings in eighteenth-century scientific agriculture were Jethro Tull's *Horse-Hoeing Husbandry*, Thomas Hales's *A Compleat Book of Husbandry*, Batty Langley's *New Principles of Gardening*, Edward Lisle's *Observation in Husbandry*, many volumes of *Annals of Agriculture*, and six volumes of *Museum Rusticum*. Washington also befriended the famous British agricultural writer Arthur Young, with whom he corresponded for eight years.[27] As his attention turned to wheat farming in the mid-1760s, the future president devoted more acres to the crop, had new fencing and barns constructed, and continually fine-tuned the labor process. He was handsomely rewarded by the growth of wheat output from 2,000 bushels in 1765 to

4,700 bushels three years later. More importantly, his income *per laborer* doubled during these years, the ultimate index of plantation "improvement."[28]

Washington also introduced new technologies to boost production. In the early 1760s, he refitted the mechanisms on his plows. Three decades later he designed new drill plows, introduced an automated milling system, and developed new wheat threshing machines based on British designs. He was not alone. Across the South, planters used pumps and hydraulic power to drain and flood lands and introduced threshing machines for rice and wheat. They built dams, mills, waterwheels, distilleries, iron works, along with tobacco, textile, and rope factories. They invested in cotton gins, boiling houses, and automatic harvesters. They constructed dams, roads, canals, and railways.[29] All of these were exercises in capitalist rationality, concerted attempts to reduce labor inputs (and therefore labor costs) per commodity unit. The automated milling system Washington introduced in the early 1790s, for instance, could operate with only one-fifth the number of workers required in a traditional mill. Workers so displaced at one work site were readily redeployed to another. This might also allow Washington to reduce overall labor costs by renting fewer slaves from other planters, a practice to which he resorted frequently.[30] In the end, it all came back to bonded labor—and its productivity.

The caricature of New World planters as indolent semifeudal aristocrats also misrepresents their social origins, sensibilities, and aspirations. Even in the British West Indies in the early going we find many small investors and merchants becoming great planters. Sir James Drax of Barbados, for instance, bragged that he had come to the colony with only £300, which he soon parlayed into landholdings worth tens of thousands of pounds. Thomas Thistlewood, the second son of a Lincolnshire tenant farmer, arrived in Jamaica in 1750, as it was entering the peak years of its sugar boom, carrying less than £15 in cash. After working for fifteen years as an overseer, he had put aside enough to buy a small estate. For the last twenty years of his life, he moved in the world of middling planters and possessed an estate with 34 slaves (valued at £3,000) at the end of his life. At the outset, many planters came from petty bourgeois, merchant, and occasionally working-class backgrounds. Where small planters could not prosper on their own, they might rise to riches through partnership with a merchant, especially England's newer merchants, more willing to take on Atlantic colonial investments.[31]

This pattern is even more pronounced in the case of the planter class of the antebellum South. Unlike the large sugar barons of Barbados, planters in the seventeenth-century Chesapeake could prosper on relatively small holdings worked by ten to twenty bonded workers. Many of these slaveholders came from "middling" backgrounds. The first Wade Hampton made his fortune by peddling food to America's revolutionary troops in South Carolina. Within twenty years he was a wealthy planter with several hundred bondpeople. Farish Carter of Georgia and Benjamin Sherrod in Alabama both parlayed wealth from army contracting during the War of 1812 into land and slaves. James A. Everett, another Georgian, turned profits from a trading post into thousands of acres and 150 enslaved people. In the Carolinas, Josiah Collins Jr., and Austin Peay found fortune as merchants before becoming successful planters. Northern Irish immigrant John Burnside started his New World life as a grocery clerk in Virginia. Later, as a New Orleans merchant, he purchased an enormous sugar estate. As a young man, David Hunt moved from New Jersey to work in his uncle's trading company in Natchez, Mississippi. Forty years later he had over 500 slaves working his lands. Throughout the Mississippi Valley, many of the large cotton planters of the nineteenth century began as modest cattle herders. Consider too the case of South Carolina planter James Henry Hammond, whose father successively failed at farming, running a store, and managing a sawmill. Yet his famous son, assisted in part by a fortuitous marriage, went on to own estates with hundreds of bondpeople, and to operate a gristmill and a cotton gin house, while investing in railroads and cotton mills.[32] Crucially, all of the individuals surveyed here, like many wealthy planters, ascended to gentry status after excelling as frugal businessmen and savvy investors. There is little evidence that they abandoned bourgeois attributes once they purchased land and slaves. Many also displayed the classically bourgeois pattern of diversifying their capital stock by partnering with merchant capitalists; investing in manufacture, retail, and banking; and operating as lenders themselves.[33]

Indeed, George Washington started out as a surveyor and land grabber. His wars against Indigenous peoples delivered him enormous tracts of land, a reminder that New World capitalism is inseparable from settler colonial violence against Indigenous peoples, and that the latter is a founding condition of the plantation complex.[34] Beginning with 1,000 acres in 1750, Washington added 8,000 with his marriage in 1759, received 70,000 acres (stolen native lands) as a reward for military service, and bought up thousands more acres as the years went by. For a

Virginian of his era, land implied slaves, and Washington was no exception. At the time of his marriage in 1759, he held 50 bondpeople; forty years later he owned over 300. Notwithstanding the expenses of a political career, decade after decade Washington turned profits into new means of production—land, slaves, machines, and buildings. If it is true that the imperative of capital is "accumulation for the sake of accumulation," then Washington was capital personified. Yet the first president merely epitomized the accumulative activities of his class. Studying the Mississippi Cotton Kingdom, one historian points out that while profits were certainly invested in fine dwellings, elegant carriages, and thoroughbred horses, "most went into purchases of additional land and slaves. The remainder was used to purchase cotton gins, cotton presses, sawmills, and other plantation equipment and machinery." A European traveler in the Gulf states in the 1830s commented on the disinterest most planters showed in personal or domestic finery. "Their pride does not consist in fine houses, fine raiment . . . It is their pride to have planted an additional acre of cane-brake, to have won a few feet from the river, or cleared a thousand trees from the forest; to have added a couple of slaves to their family." Journeying through Texas in the mid-1850s, Frederick Law Olmsted was dismayed by the modest dwelling of a reasonably prosperous planter, whose profits he estimated as $6,000 over two years. "What," he asked, "do people living in this style do with so much money? They buy more negroes and enlarge their plantations."[35] Indeed, they did.

Let us take a moment here to define the term *planters*. Richard S. Dunn suggests that in Barbados colonists with fewer than ten acres of land were best described as *freemen*. I will generally refer to such individuals as *farmers*. Those with more than ten acres but twenty or fewer slaves Dunn labeled *small planters*. He termed *middling planters* those who owned between 20 and 60 bondpeople. Above these groups were *large planters*, those owning 60 enslaved workers or more. By 1817, nearly 30 percent of Barbadian estates had enslaved workforces numbering more than 100; the largest had in excess of 300 slaves. In the British colony of Demerara, nearly half of all estates had more than 200 chattel laborers by 1813. In the antebellum South, however, property in land and chattel laborers was generally less concentrated. This is in part because the first major staple commodity, tobacco, could be cultivated with a much smaller capital investment than could sugar, thus allowing poorer farmers to keep a foothold in the market. In the US context, the term *planter* has usually indicated a landowner possessing more than 20 slaves. Yet, even by that modest criterion, as late as 1860 only

12 percent of all Southern slaveholders qualified as planters. And among that group, only 2,300 individuals made up the true planter elite, those holding 100 or more bondpeople. The censuses of 1850 and 1860 showed that merely 8 percent of Mississippi planters held 500 acres and 50 or more bondpeople; just one percent of all Southern slaveholders in 1860 comprised a true planter gentry (defined as those who possessed 100 or more slaves).[36] And among that group, bourgeois attitudes and capitalist practices were the norm.

To be sure, Washington was extreme in his attachment to bourgeois values of order, industry, and sobriety. Hiring a white worker in 1787, the first president cautioned him against associating with "idle, drunken and dissolute People." On another occasion, he complained of a new gardener that he had not employed him "to be *idl*e, or to keep him in *idleness*." Bringing on a new manager at Union Farm in 1794, he prayed that he would be "sober, honest, industrious and docile."[37] Industry, sobriety, and frugality were Washington's bywords. Even as president, he obsessively reviewed his farm managers' weekly reports, querying minute details. And when he was at Mount Vernon, he compulsively rode around his estates every morning, inspecting crops, fences, and laborers. To be sure, the planter class had its share of dissolute characters, as does the modern bourgeoisie today. But the values promoted by planter journals and agricultural societies, by the political economy texts they read, and by the colleges to which they sent their children were thoroughly bourgeois. Landon Carter's diaries too overflowed with "familiar advice about studying books and avoiding gaming tables," as one historian notes. Consider also Edward Harden of Georgia, who adorned his diary on February 9, 1839, by inscribing the words "Industry, perseverance, prudence, economy, temperance" in the middle of the page.[38]

Because capital must be mobile—in order to chase the highest rate of return—New World slaveowners were also uniquely so. Unlike feudal lords, their power was not tied to specific lands and estates. Land was a means of production, not the basis of hereditary power and privileges. If better pastures beckoned, planters were ready to get up and go. "Better pastures" here means, of course, potentially more profitable lands. Especially in the US South, with massive supplies of land stolen from Indigenous peoples, planters were a highly mobile class. Indeed, only one-fifth of Southern slaveholders lived in the same place for more than two decades.[39] The vast majority moved at least once to new lands, usually taking their bondpeople with them. Enslaved labor-power, not land, was their critical asset.

PATERNALISTIC CAPITALISTS

None of this is to deny that slaveowners cultivated gentry bearings. English colonial planters were keen to emulate the habits and behaviors of the mother country's landed class. Yet that group, as we have seen, was a landed class of a new type, a capitalist gentry that had refashioned economy, law, political institutions, and elite culture in its image. In the West Indies, planter identification with this group was a given, as many of the wealthiest slaveowners were linked by family and business ties to England's merchants and landowners. Indeed, many great planters in the West Indies returned to England and became integral members of the ruling class at home. Take the four Beckford brothers of Jamaica, who held more than 42,000 acres of land on the island. William returned to England and became Lord Mayor of London and a Member of Parliament for London, while Richard, who owned 910 Jamaican slaves at his death, was elected MP for Bristol.[40] Even in the mainland colonies, imitation of English landed gentlemen was deeply ingrained. The great planter families of Virginia, Maryland, and South Carolina, much like Washington, mimicked the cultural tastes of the English gentry, just as they imitated the architectural style of their great estate houses. The wealthy slaveholders of northern Virginia were even known as "the Barons of the Potomac," laying out their plantation homes in the British pastoral style, with elaborate gardens and buildings that circled the family mansion like planets orbiting their sun.[41] This gentry aesthetic gestured to images of planter paternalism, with beneficent lords ruling families and tenants.

Yet we must proceed with caution here given the outsize influence of Eugene Genovese's ahistorical image of slaveowner paternalism. In Genovese's account, New World plantations were "archaic regimes" whose "dominant tendency was paternalism." To be archaic here is to be premodern. As an antiquated institution, the plantation for Genovese embodied prebourgeois behaviors and ideological commitments: "The values of the plantation, its ways of thought and feeling, were antithetical to those of the bourgeois world." Rather than specific to the antebellum South, paternalism for Genovese is a universal feature of the master-slave relation, particularly in an agrarian setting. From ancient to modern times, he declares, "all slave regimes exhibited this tendency." Genovese's claim here is entirely transhistorical. Nowhere does he engage Marx's distinction between ancient and modern slavery, or his differentiation of early slavery in much of the United States from its radically different later forms. In its first stage in the United States,

Marx writes, small-scale production for "the satisfaction of local requirements" gave the system "a moderately patriarchal character." The producing unit had a domestic form, organized as a unit of "family" labor led by a petty slaveholding patriarch. But from the American Revolution on, Southern slavery became predominantly a large-scale commodity-producing system governed by "the production of surplus-value." The plantation complex was now regulated by the harsh demands of the world market, not the will of a petty tyrant.[42]

What Marx traces here is a *decline* of patriarchal relations as plantation slavery assumed a more commodified form. Increasingly, the master's power embodied the *impersonal* domination of capital. Of course, it always retained a personal dimension; but the master was remade as a personification of capital, as an enforcer of market imperatives. Allergic to real political economy, Genovese sees none of this. The plantation is for him always and everywhere archaic, premodern, and antibourgeois. His fundamentally static analysis is oblivious to historical shifts and transformations. In addition, Genovese entirely ignores the comparative evidence of the two largest slave plantation systems of the mid-nineteenth century, Brazil and the US South. Here we see that it was the one with a *larger* proportion of slaves—the antebellum South—that had significantly more railways, banks, industrial factories, and more widespread agricultural innovations. Rather than retarding these forms of modern economic development, slavery in the South was entirely compatible with them.[43]

Genovese tended to see the plantation only from above, reproducing the fantasized self-image of the slaveholders. If ideology invents imaginary solutions "to unresolvable social antagonisms," then planter paternalism was precisely such a fantastic resolution of real antagonisms.[44] In his plantation pastoral Genovese focused narrowly on the domestic interaction of master and slave in the big house, as if that were what defined the plantation. This, however, is to ignore the fields and the field workers, along with those who toiled in the mills, boiling houses, distilleries, and so on. As Kenneth Stampp recognized, "plantation paternalism . . . was in most cases a leisure-class family indulgence of its domestics." Its presence in the fields—where the whip, the clock, and the bell prevailed—was fundamentally decorative. This is why the labor process, the disciplinary regime of field work, and its relation to global markets play so little a role in Genovese's ostensible *political economy* of New World slavery.[45] It is as if the patriarchal sensibilities of a class of slave-masters were simply transplanted, ever so slightly

modified, from the ancient Graeco-Roman world to the Americas of the eighteenth century. Genovese has no sense of the ways in which paternalism often subtended capitalist development. He seems oblivious to the reality that capitalist social relations have frequently come into the world under the domination of ruling classes whose values were hierarchical, antidemocratic, and thoroughly elitist.

Let us pause here to address a long-standing confusion. Transfixed by the idea that the bourgeoisie is an urban class of merchants and manufacturers, many historians have missed the deep roots of capitalism in the English countryside. Yet it was there that land was first enclosed, millions of peasants dispossessed, and new forms of commodity production created.[46] With these epochal transformations—which culminated in the disappearance of the English peasantry—there came new definitions of property, a new bourgeois monarchy, systematic "improvement" of agriculture via capital investment, and the generation of a home market for industry. A social transition of this order transformed the landowning class too. Speaking of the "class of big landed proprietors" in England from the late Tudor period, Marx remarked that "their landed estates were not feudal but bourgeois property." While they lived on the land and demanded deference from their "servants," their wealth and power rested on accumulating agrarian capital by exploiting rural wage labor, that is, on *bourgeois property*. So thorough was the capitalist transformation of English agriculture that, as E. P. Thompson put it, the English gentry of the eighteenth century "made up a superbly successful and self-confident capitalist class."[47]

Historians increasingly appreciate that agrarian elites have overseen capitalist transformations in many settings. Examining the cases of Prussia and the US South, Shearer Davis Bowman has identified "conservative agrarian capitalists" as key to capitalist development in those regions. And in a direct rebuke to Eugene Genovese's cartoon version of the antebellum South, Bowman points out that in multiple societies "a type of 'paternalism' proved quite compatible with capitalist industrialization and wage labor in the nineteenth century." Other historians have elucidated the central role of agrarian classes in the making of capitalism in southern Italy and Japan. And certainly Friedrich Engels had no doubt about "the bourgeois nature of the planters" of the South.[48]

Returning to England, it is now a staple of scholarship to emphasize the preeminence of "gentlemanly capitalism" in English history. Consider the following passage from P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, who seek to understand Britain's imperial history: "By the close of the seventeenth

century the landed magnates had ceased to be a feudal aristocracy and were ready to embrace a market philosophy. Nonetheless, they were still the heirs of a feudal tradition; and the landed capitalism which evolved in Britain after the Stuarts was heavily influenced by pre-capitalist notions of order, authority and status."[49]

Order, authority, and status. These values were foundational for the class that built the first great capitalist empire. This was the case not just for Tories, but also for their more liberal elite opponents, the Whigs. The latter, in whose circles John Locke moved, held that all societies were best governed by a prosperous and enlightened landed class, a "natural aristocracy." Championing deference by the poor toward their "betters," along with monarchy and a hereditary House of Lords as bulwarks against democracy, they accepted that the rich might charitably "care" for the poor—so long as the latter were obedient and submissive to authority. Riot and rebellion certainly did not elicit paternalism; they were invariably met with violent repression. The gentry only entertained obligations to the poor as a variant of their duties toward faithful children. In fact, they modeled their "dependents" as children who needed the discipline and moral guidance of a paterfamilias. Jealous of their rights to property, they might indulge a limited benevolence toward their "inferiors." In short, they were *paternalistic capitalists*. As much as they aggressively enclosed on peasants and sent armed troops against rebels, bourgeois paternalists nevertheless prided themselves on their "charity" toward the most unfortunate. Glowing with self-satisfaction, they pronounced themselves dutiful Christians while promoting militarism, colonialism, and the trade in enslaved Africans.[50]

The paternalism of the English ruling class was a thoroughly modern code of elite behavior meant to secure hegemony over the governed. To be sure, it vibrated with overtones of older forms of social dominance. That was the whole point: to draw on tradition to justify *new* modes of exploitation. Rather than a lingering remnant of ancient practices, paternalism became a *more* pronounced part of the ideological repertoire of the British ruling class during the nineteenth century as working-class discontent mounted. Faced with labor turbulence and social unrest, British capitalists fashioned the idea of a paternalistic state concerned for the well-being of the poor.[51] Without a doubt, their image as benevolent patriarchs also provided a degree of narcissistic consolation. But such consolations had their limits. Rarely would charity undermine class interest. One historian has rightly noted that Southern planters embraced "both the capitalist market and a social ideology based on hierarchy,

honor, and paternalism."[52] And they were not alone in this regard. For paternalism was also part of the practical repertoire of many industrial capitalists in Britain, the United States, and Germany. Perhaps most famously, textile magnate Robert Owen adapted it to the organization of his mills in Scotland. We find something quite similar, without Owen's pretentious moralizing, in the "factory paternalism" of textile manufacturers in Philadelphia in the nineteenth century. And looking at Germany during a similar period, social historians have discerned "a particularly ruthless variety of company paternalism" among industrialists there.[53] Paternalistic capitalism also carried pronounced strains of economic liberalism. After all, planters had no difficulty melding doctrines of hierarchy and social deference with liberal political economy. By the 1820s, in fact, free trade had become the default position of Southern planters.[54]

Among other things, Southern planters embraced the science of political economy and sent their sons to Northern universities. They launched and subscribed to journals that promoted agricultural improvement. And all the while they brutalized their slaves. South Carolinian John Henry Hammond, for instance, disseminated Baconian science while making sure his overseers liberally applied the whip. Thomas Thistlewood was an extreme sadist in the punishments he inflicted on his bondpeople, even by local Jamaican standards. Yet, he bought scientific instruments for experiment and assembled a substantial library featuring Scottish Enlightenment texts by the likes of David Hume and Adam Smith. By the 1770s, still only a middling planter, Thistlewood had built a widely acclaimed English garden and established his reputation as a leading horticulturalist. Fifty years later, Alexander McDonnell advanced a defense of West Indian bondage, *Considerations on Negro Slavery* (1824), in largely liberal terms. Even in Saint-Domingue, where political liberalism was considerably weaker than in the British colonies, doctrines of scientific enlightenment and agrarian improvement figured prominently in the planter worldview.[55] Contra Genovese, therefore, the values of the New World plantation were not in the least "antithetical to those of the bourgeois world." In their embrace of liberal property rights, scientific agriculture, and an Enlightenment commitment to natural science, planters were in and of capitalist modernity.

If there was a paternalist shift in the US South, it occurred among the Southern gentry in the context of the Revolutionary War. The pledge of the British colonial leadership to emancipate any slave who came over to them produced a crisis of slaveowner power and authority. Probably tens of thousands of bonded people fled to the British in search of freedom;

thousands more behaved with growing insolence and self-assertiveness on their estates, particularly when British troops were nearby. In South Carolina, suggests one historian, flight and rebellion approached the level of a "general strike" in the rice fields. In this context, planters sought to bolster their authority by cultivating emotional attachments between master and slave. Invoking sentimentalist doctrines, they promoted "charity" toward bondpeople as a supplement to violence. The harshness of slave codes was softened, all in order to buttress the stability of the plantation complex.[56] This analysis is, of course, a historical one, not a transhistorical proposition. It applies to a specific region (the antebellum South) at a particular period (post–Revolutionary War). Note, too, that in this interpretation, the Southern gentry's turn to "paternalism" came as a response to threats from below, rather than something inherent in the slave-owning disposition. Notwithstanding their claims for sentiment, charity, and benevolence, planters moderated coercion and cultivated personal attachment in order to secure their authority over an increasingly unruly class of enslaved people.

Let us consider the case of the wealthy and "improving" South Carolinian Henry Laurens. Defending his treatment of enslaved people, Laurens informed Alexander Hamilton in 1785 that "the use of the Lash" was banned on his estate. His slaves, he intoned, were well fed and content; "to some of them I already allow Wages," he asserted. His bondpeople were, he added, "my Watchmen and my friends." Fortuitously, his benevolence was rewarded: "I beleive [sic] no man gets more work from his Negroes than I do." Providence had been kind to him emotionally too. "Never," he wrote, "was an absolute Monarch more happy in his Subjects than at the present time I am." Alas, notwithstanding their ostensibly near-paradisical state, some enslaved people failed to return his affection. Benevolent Laurens had a solution ready to hand: "If you deserve whipping I shall conclude you don't love me & will sell you."[57] There is, of course, a curious sense of "love" in play here. But then, the premise of Laurens's benevolence was that "no man gets more work from his Negroes than I do." "Love" had become an instrument for the appropriation of surplus value.

This brings us to the critical question of reciprocity in the paternalist relation between master and slave. As Orlando Patterson noted, there could at times be a sort of perverse intimacy between master and slave. But for the enslaved "this was usually calculating and sadomasochistic." Bondpeople excelled at *performing* affection toward their owners because "no authentic human relationship was possible where violence was the ultimate sanction." Slaves had a compelling interest in flattering the

benevolent pretenses of their owners. To indulge masters might elicit favors and relaxation of plantation discipline; it might induce the doling out of gifts, money, and passes. As scholars have shown, bonded people were experts at "puttin' on ole massa" to serve their own interests.[58] They could do so partly because, for many planters, paternalism was a deeply narcissistic investment. The egocentric master is in love with the image of *himself* as an object of adulation from those he dominates. In this erotics of domination, his love for his power *over* the other involves a fantastic projection in which the enslaved return the "love" of their abuser. Domination here masquerades as reciprocity. This is the ethos that enabled both Landon and Washington to regularly authorize the whip to discipline and punish their "beloved" servants.[59] Beneath the veneer of paternalism lurked the menace of violence. And enslaved people knew it.

Even in Jamaica, where treatment of enslaved Blacks was notoriously brutal, planters avowed paternalist attitudes. Richard Beckford instructed his Jamaican lawyers that the nearly 1,000 slaves he owned were to be treated with "Justice and Benevolence." It remains the case, however, that, as one historian puts it, "The principal method of controlling slaves in Jamaica was through terror."[60] It may be the case, for instance, that Thomas Thistlewood developed affective bonds with his first slave, known as Lincoln. Yet, Thistlewood flogged Lincoln more frequently than his other slaves. And Lincoln in turn, notwithstanding his ostensible ties to his master, repeatedly stole from him. There was a sadism inherent in slaveholder notions of tenderness toward their human chattel. And many bondpeople sought retribution: by stealing, slowing down in the fields, and absconding. In one of his more sensitive comments in this area, Genovese acknowledged that many enslaved people were "seething with hostility toward those who commanded the paternalistic relationship." More than this, as an astute commentator notes, in stealing from their masters, enslaved people were actually trying to "redefine and extend the bounds of paternalism."[61] On the side of bondpeople, in other words, the "paternalist" aspirations of their owners were something to be manipulated and extended as far as possible.

James Henry Hammond of South Carolina savored having his enslaved people put on clean clothes and line up in an orderly way to receive their weekly food rations. The South Carolinian deeply "cherished a conception of himself as a beneficent master," enacting a script in which crisply dressed "servants" gratefully awaited their master's benevolence.[62] Yet Hammond too was dedicated to the whip. Unsurprisingly, bondpeople were rarely under illusions about the vagaries of

the slave-owning ego. Where it served their interests, they could play the roles expected of them in the paternalist drama. But at moments of instability and crisis in the system, large numbers could abruptly abandon this role-playing, metamorphosing into defiant, angry, mocking rebels. In many areas of the South during the Civil War, "the coming of the Yankees suddenly snapped the old ties." Such transformations could be shattering. John H. Phillips was shocked, for instance, when he spoke to his bondpeople like a "father," only to be greeted with laughter. As the Civil War letters and diaries of slaveowners in the South reveal, masters often experienced slave rebellion as a shocking betrayal of their affection for those they owned. Insubordination and flight crushed paternalist delusions and traumatized the slaveholding ego. An entire sense of self and society collapsed. In the face of such trauma, as Jessica Benjamin notes, the formerly dominant will cling to a "persistent, if unconscious, wish to fulfill the old omnipotence fantasy."[63] This is why rebellion elicits anxiety as much as anger, just as it did for Washington and his fellow Virginian, Landon Carter.

In June 1776, amid the Revolutionary War, eight of Landon Carter's bondpeople fled to the British in hopes of freedom. This desertion haunted Carter. His diary shows him struggling with "the old omnipotence fantasy." Of six dreams recorded there during this period, four involved the overturning of patriarchal power and authority. For months after the escape, Carter followed every rumor of the fugitives' whereabouts. His diary then went quiet until, thirteen months after the "villains" had absconded, three more slaves fled his plantation. Now his obsession with the original eight returned. In a flurry of agitated self-justification, he began to itemize how much he had done for each, claiming to have saved the lives of five of them. The wounded patriarch now projected himself in godly proportions, as a giver of life. All this grandiose overcompensation surely indicates the severity of the psychological blow he had suffered. Desperately needing to believe in the devotion of his bondpeople, Carter cast himself as the giver of life, the better to portray the fugitives as ungrateful villains.[64]

Now let us consider George Washington's response to the flight of Oney Judge, one of the bonded servants who maintained his presidential household in Philadelphia. On a May afternoon in 1796, Judge slipped away. Although the president compulsively pursued her until his death three and a half years later, she was never to return. At first, unwilling to accept that his loyal servant had fled voluntarily, the president insisted that she had "been decoyed away," identifying an unnamed "Frenchman" as

her deceiver. Intent on her capture, Washington soon advertised in local papers, offering a ten-dollar reward for the runaway's return. Then, abusing his powers as president, he enlisted the services of a federal government department, one of whose agents was sent off as a slave catcher. Boiling with paternalist rage, Washington denounced "the ingratitude of the girl, who was brought up and treated more like a child than a Servant." Discovering Judge in New Hampshire, Washington's agent tried to bargain with her. To no avail; she would not return. When the agent then proposed that the president negotiate with Judge, perhaps for a brief return followed by manumission, he exploded: "To enter into such a compromise with her . . . is inadmissible." It would be, he continued, "to reward unfaithfulness." Yet, in a complete non sequitur, his letter reverted once more to the fiction that she had been lured away "by a Frenchman."

Washington's incoherence here displays all the contradictions of spurned paternalism. Judge is attacked for her "ingratitude" and "unfaithfulness," as if any reasonable slave would be grateful for the affection of their master. This is why any compromise would have been "inadmissible." Still, the president vacillated. After all, Judge could not really have abandoned those who had "treated her more like a child than a Servant." Hence the suggestion that she was lured away in a moment of confusion; in this case by a Frenchman who was probably "deranged." Like Landon Carter in the case of the eleven escapees of 1776, Washington could not process his rejection by a bondperson. Paternalistic narcissism is a fragile thing; when destabilized, it conjures fantasy scenarios. The agent sent to secure Judge's return saw things more clearly, however. "It appeared to me that she had not been decoyed away as had been apprehended, but that a thirst for compleat freedom . . . had been her only motive for absconding."[65]

There is the Achilles heel of planter paternalism. Enslaved people might sometimes feign gratitude for planter "benevolence"; in some circumstances they might actually feel it. But the sensation was constrained by "a thirst for compleat freedom." That was a craving planter capitalists could not satisfy. Emancipation invariably posed an enduring threat to their wealth and power. And so, despite their deep need to feel loved by their "children," planters violently thwarted bondpeople's quest for liberty. Behind the theatrical displays, bondpeople intuited a deep truth: their masters would not countenance their freedom. So they would have to take it themselves. As did Oney Judge, Landon's eleven fugitives of 1776, and so many others.

CHAPTER 3

"Without a Servant to Make His Bed"

Labor and Race in Colonial Capitalism

In the second type of colonies—plantations—where commercial speculations figure from the start and production is intended for the world market, the capitalist mode of production exists.

—Karl Marx

In a surprise to many commentators, Marx concludes *Capital* with a chapter on colonialism. Despite the significance he obviously attributed to it, this chapter has attracted surprisingly little critical commentary. Beyond its serving as the conclusion to his great work, Marx posed there a hugely important problem with respect to the world history of capitalism. I say Marx *posed* a problem there because he certainly did not resolve it. Titled "The Modern Theory of Colonialism," *Capital*'s final chapter broached the issue of how capitalist relations of production might be transplanted to England's overseas colonies. In exploring this question, his primary interlocutor was the English author and colonial official Edwin Gibbon Wakefield.[1] In his commentary, Marx ironically commends Wakefield before quickly turning sarcastic.

Wakefield recounts a colonization project of the 1830s led by Thomas Peel to the Swan River Colony in West Australia. Dreaming of colonial riches, Peel brought with him hundreds of laborers to settle millions of acres. It did not go well. Reading Wakefield's dismayed account, Marx mocks the failed colonizer:

> A Mr. Peel, he [Wakefield] complains, took with him from England to the Swan River District of Western Australia means of subsistence and of

> production to the amount of £50,000. This Mr. Peel even had the foresight to bring with him 3,000 persons of the working class, men, women and children. Once he arrived at his destination, 'Mr. Peel was left without a servant to make his bed or fetch him water from the river.' Unhappy Mr. Peel, who provided for everything except the export of English relations of production to Swan River.[2]

Rather than toil for him, Peel's servants had all run off to squat on land. After a bit more fun with all this, Marx reminds us that laboring people eschew wage labor if they can find soil to work for themselves—as they could in the Western Australia of the 1830s. In such conditions, the prospective wage laborer "vanishes from the labour-market" and reappears as an "independent artisan or peasant, working for himself."[3] Capitalist relations of production can be consolidated, therefore, only where land has been privatized and monopolized. Notwithstanding all his careful planning, unhappy Mr. Peel forgot that he could not export "English relations of production to Swan River." As a result, he was "left without a servant to make his bed or fetch him water from the river."

Marx was regularly amused by stories such as this. In his *Grundrisse* notebooks, he delighted in a *Times* of London report on the dismay of West Indian planters after the end of British colonial slavery. The "free blacks of Jamaica," Marx writes, showed no predilection to accept wage labor on the plantations. Instead, they were content "with producing only what is necessary for their own consumption." Abjuring the capitalist work ethic, they spent their leisure time "loafing." With land to work for themselves, "They have ceased to be slaves, but not in order to become wage-labourers." To the shock of their former owners—and to Marx's great amusement—these free people "do not care a damn for the sugar and the fixed capital invested in the plantations." Like the story of Thomas Peel, this "delightful" one from Jamaica underscored the artificiality of capitalist relations. Only with the dispossession of millions from land did "the silent compulsion of economic relations"—enforced by the threat of starvation—replace the overt compulsion of bondage.[4]

Peel's failure in the New World disclosed the "secret" of the capitalist mode of production in the Old World: that the system rests "upon the expropriation of the worker," their dispossession from the soil.[5] This is a revolutionary insight. It completes Marx's account of the originary accumulation of capital. As a comprehensive explanation of the *global emergence* of capitalism, however, it falls short. This is because Marx turns away from the colonies to look back to Europe; he uses Peel's

failed colonial experiment to explain what made capitalism possible *in Europe*. But if we keep our eyes on the colonies, it becomes apparent that not all New World experiments were failures. And this obliges us to confront a distinctive problem. We need now to account for how capital could develop in the colonies *without* widespread wage labor. This may not have been Marx's question in *Capital*. But it is our question. And it is a critical one for anyone interested in the historical bond between capitalism and slavery. So let us stay with Wakefield and the colonies a bit longer than did Marx.

"NO FREE MAN WOULD WORK"

Wakefield was not the first to see the unique labor dilemma of colonial capitalism. Alexander McDonell laid it out in *Considerations on Negro Slavery* (1824). Having spent five years in the British slave colony of Demerara, McDonnell returned to England to work as secretary to the Committee of West India Merchants, a proslavery lobby group. Yet McDonnell could not afford to be a crude apologist in the face of the growing influence of abolitionism. Instead, he defended colonial slavery by appealing to principles of liberal political economy. In *Considerations*, McDonnell argues that emancipated slaves show no inclination to become "a free peasantry working for hire" due to "the abundance of food throughout the West Indies," which allows free people to enjoy "the privilege of being idle." As if channeling Marx, McDonnell asserts that "without compulsion" no one will work for another. Such compulsion, he continues, "is of two kinds, the coercion of a master, and the dread of starvation."[6] Given the abundance of food in the West Indies, free people will always be able to feed themselves. Dread of starvation is thus irrelevant. Only "the coercion of a master" can provide a market economy in the colonies.

Wakefield raises this argument a notch higher. After all, abundance of food requires access to land. Without such access, there is no guaranteed supply of food. Slavery developed in America, he then claims, in order to prohibit bonded people from securing their own land: "The original and permanent cause of slavery in America is super-abundance of good land." He conveniently forgets that this "super-abundance" was made possible by the violent dispossession of Indigenous peoples. But he is right that, where cheap land is available, people will avoid the labor market. Like McDonnell, Wakefield saw slavery as the obvious solution. He argued that development in the US South "could not have taken place without slavery"; indeed "not a single society" with a

"superabundance of good land" had prospered without it. Faced with a dearth of wage laborers in the colonies, wealthy European settlers "want slaves" to provide "labour which shall be constant." And "constant" labor means workers who cannot willy-nilly exit the market; it entails labor that *must* stay in place.[7]

Wakefield here identifies the principal reason that colonial capitalism in the New World was built on bonded labor. A little more than a century later, Eric Williams pinpointed it in *Capitalism and Slavery*. "Other things being equal," Williams argued, "free men would be preferred." But, he continued, "in the early stages of colonial development other things are not equal. When slavery is adopted, it is not adopted as the choice over free labor; there is no choice at all." Or, as Sidney Mintz put it, "Since such a labor force would not materialize 'freely,' it would have to be dragooned."[8] This is what Wakefield discerned. "Without servants," as he saw in the case of unhappy Mr. Peel, "capital perished." In Atlantic colonies, capital would accumulate primarily through bonded labor until well into the nineteenth century. Yet, writing on the eve of British abolition, Wakefield needed a pathway to that other form of coercion identified by McDonnell, "the dread of starvation." To this end, his scheme for systematic colonization centered on raising colonial land prices. Increase these sufficiently and poor immigrants would be compelled to work for wages before they could expect to buy land. High prices for land would *economically* force them into the labor market. This is why Marx drew attention to Wakefield's argument. The British writer had stumbled upon the secret of primitive accumulation: separation of laborers from the land. But whereas Marx returned to Europe with Wakefield's insight in hand, we shall stay with the colonies. And this means attending to the two centuries in which bondage was the key to New World capitalism.[9]

BLOCKING THE TURNOVER OF LABOR: FORMS OF BONDAGE IN NEW WORLD CAPITALISM

Aspiring capitalists in Atlantic colonies were constantly plagued by the rapid turnover of hired labor. Even with a relatively high wage rate, employers in Maryland could not hold on to workers in the mid-seventeenth century. A study of 158 wage earners in that colony showed that most spurned full-time waged work, preferring to farm their own land while supplementing income with brief episodes of wage labor. The impermanence of wage workers hugely frustrated employers, making the

use of bondpeople highly attractive. A century later, Benjamin Franklin acknowledged that mainland colonists bought enslaved Africans "because slaves may be kept as long as a man pleases, or has occasion for their labour, while hired men are continually leaving their master . . . and setting up for themselves." This problem was by no means unique to the mainland colonies. During roughly five years in the middle of the eighteenth century, Jamaican estate manager Thomas Thistlewood hired eighteen white men. Most stayed less than three months; only one remained for a full year. In the antebellum South, the C&O Canal Company imported 500 indentured servants from England in 1829 to build canals. Faced with low wages and brutal working conditions, large numbers simply ran off. In 1851, the Cape Fear Navigation Company of North Carolina introduced 180 German and Hungarian immigrants from New York. They fled as quickly as they could. William S. Pettigrew, a local planter, declared in 1847 that, as much as enslaved Blacks were "a troublesome property," canals "must be dug by them, or not at all."[10] Even factory owners in the northern United States routinely struggled with worker turnover rates of 100 percent (i.e. with the loss of every worker inside twelve months or less). This played enormous havoc with production and profits. But in the South, where enslaved labor was readily available, many industrial enterprises—iron making, lumbering, mining, rope making, tobacco processing, and more—relied on Black bonded labor.[11]

All of this reaffirms Eric Williams's insistence that, "when slavery is adopted, it is not adopted as the choice over free labor; there is no choice at all."[12] Even before the widespread turn to Black chattel slavery, a multiplicity of forms of "unfree" labor had been instrumental to capitalist development in Europe and its colonies. Yet, most unfree workers—apprentices, servants in husbandry, and impressed sailors—typically received wages, even if these were subject to outrageous delays and frauds. *Unfree wage labor* was in many respects the norm since a majority of wage workers lacked minimal legal freedom in the economic sphere. Until the last decades of the nineteenth century, most wage workers in Britain and its colonies came under "Master and Servant" acts, which criminalized workers who left employment early or who engaged in acts of "insubordination." Typically, laborers were not free to leave a job when they chose. They were regularly incarcerated for up to three months for departing before predetermined calendar dates. Throughout Britain and its colonies, "an immense amount of legislation . . . subjected 'free' workers to penal law or to their masters' will legitimated by law." And these practices were carried into the Americas, where "many

workers who earned wages did so without any semblance of market freedom." This is why, as Robert J. Steinfeld has argued, historians need to move beyond models that depict types of labor—such as "free" and "unfree"—as distinct forms that possess "timeless characteristics."[13]

In conditions where "surplus populations" scarcely existed because land was not highly monopolized, dominant classes used bondage to guarantee access to labor-power. Whether this involved European indentured servants, Indigenous people held in bondage, or enslaved Africans, the objective was to secure labor. Without that, land was effectively worthless. This is why planters are best understood as *laborlords*, owners whose wealth depended on owning stocks of bonded labor-power tied to prison labor camps.[14] For reasons we have explored, African chattel slavery would become the dominant New World relation of *bonded labor-power* for 200 years (1660–1860). And even as chattel slavery was eliminated, first in the British Empire in 1833, in the United States a little more than three decades later, and in Cuba and Brazil after that, other forms of bonded labor flourished, many of which had coexisted with full slavery.

Well before the elimination of slavery in the antebellum South, modes of Indigenous bondage were operative in the southwestern United States. A constellation of unfree labor arrangements in New Mexico, California, Arizona, and Utah provided for debt bondage, compulsory labor for custodial minors, indentured service, and forced apprenticeships for native people. Before California was incorporated into the US, coerced wage labor was inscribed in a Los Angeles law of 1830 that required all Indigenous people to work for an employer or face arrest and fines. On top of this, debt peonage—forced labor arising from personal debts—bound thousands into unfree labor arrangements. These policies continued after California became a US state. In the 1850s an "Indian" found vagrant in California could be compelled to work by any white person. It is true that bonded Indigenous labor in the US West never developed on a scale comparable to plantation slavery. In part, this had to do with the modest operations of hacienda lords in New Mexico, who generally worked their estates with ten or fewer captives and peons. By 1855, however, that state's vagrancy law imposed forced labor on all "beggars," mimicking earlier vagrancy statutes in Pennsylvania and other parts of the US Mid-Atlantic.[15]

But in the postemancipation period, no form of bonded labor so dominated the Atlantic World as the "coolie system," which channeled millions of indentured laborers from India and China onto Caribbean

plantations. Here was a widespread regime of unfree labor that solved the Wakefield problem without legal enslavement. A shipowner in Amitav Ghosh's novel *Sea of Poppies* gets to the heart of the matter. Asked whom he will transport in the aftermath of emancipation, the owner replies, "Not slaves—coolies. Have you not heard it said that when God closes one door he opens another? When the doors of freedom were closed to the African, the Lord opened them to a tribe that was much more needful of it—the Asiatick." And while the new system of indentured Asian labor was most widespread in the Caribbean, variants of it were adopted on Louisiana sugar estates and in mining and railway construction in Canada and the western United States.[16]

. . .

The persistence of compulsory labor for hundreds of years in the New World is a problem for those liberals and Marxists who insist that capitalism exists only where something called "free labor" predominates. Such theorists have two options: they can cling to their ideal-type models and simply ignore the manifest realities of colonial capitalist development; or they can reconstruct those models in light of lived history. This is a long-standing issue. In early twentieth-century Russia, for instance, Vladimir Lenin criticized the cookie-cutter Marxists of his day. "Our literature," he declared, "frequently contains too stereotyped an understanding of the theoretical proposition that capitalism requires the free, landless worker." Reflecting on the way a feudal form of coercion, known as corvée labor, had been incorporated into capitalist farming in Russia, Lenin claimed this showed how the feudal "labour-service system passes into the capitalist system and merges with it."[17] He further urged that similar hybrid forms existed in the Moscow pottery industry.

Just as they do today, many left commentators of Lenin's day denied that economic activity based on bondage could be capitalist. Lenin countered: "The argument is based on extremely strange methods that are not Marxist at all. A comparison is made between 'bondage' and 'differentiation' as between two independent special 'systems.'" There were not two ideal-type systems in play here, he argued. Rather, there was a single but complex historical process in which "bondage . . . is nothing but the initial manifestation of capitalism in agriculture." An apparently feudal form of unfree labor could thus embody a specifically capitalist content—the production of surplus value. In such cases, an "embryonic form of capitalist relations is totally enmeshed in the feudal

relations of former times: here there is no free contract, but a forced deal."[18] Rather than conform to textbook models, the actual evolution of capitalism has proceeded through the combination of "precapitalist" relations with capitalist production. In fact, capitalist agriculture has continued to deploy semibonded labor into the twenty-first century, particularly in the form of temporary agricultural worker programs in the Global North. This is why, in historical life, "infinitely diverse combinations of this or that type of capitalist elements are possible."[19]

THE COERCED SUBSUMPTION OF LABOR BY CAPITAL

Marx seems not to have read widely on the history of the West Indies. But his preoccupation with the Civil War in the United States familiarized him with the history of slavery there. If, in the early going, "Negro labour in the southern states of the American Union . . . was chiefly directed to the satisfaction of immediate local requirements," he wrote, by the middle of the eighteenth century it was defined by "the production of surplus-value itself."[20] Before turning to the production of surplus value in plantation slavery in the next chapter, let us begin with the commodity.

The commodity, Marx declared, is "the first category in which bourgeois wealth presents itself." It is "the elementary form" in which capital appears.[21] Whatever else it might have been, the plantation complex was a giant machine for producing commodities. The hundreds of millions of tons of sugar, tobacco, cotton, wheat, rice, coffee, and more produced by bonded labor were certainly not churned out as use-values for the consumption of their owners or their direct producers. These were goods produced *for* exchange, for sale on markets both near and far. To be sure, all these goods *had* use-values, that is, useful properties that made them objects of demand. But they were *produced* as commodities for the world market, as exchange-values meant to return a profit. In the plantation economy, sugar, cotton, tobacco, coffee, indigo, rice, wheat, and more become commensurable as mere quanta of human labor in the abstract and therefore exchangeable for units of money, the universal representative of abstract labor. They become quantitative bits of value in general.[22]

That New World plantations by 1750 were commodity-producing units integrated into world markets is a relatively uncontroversial claim.[23] Even Eugene Genovese, famous for his insistence on the noncapitalist character of the Southern planter class in the United States,

conceded that "the slaveholders operated in a capitalist world market, they presided over the production of commodities, and they had to pay attention to profit-and-loss statements."[24] These imperatives derived from the very nature of New World plantations as modern business enterprises. Planters, after all, had invested heavily in land, bonded laborers, and machinery and equipment. They regularly dipped into credit markets to do so and were on the hook for the repayment of loans with interest. Without a competitive rate of return, they were wasting and squandering their capital—and with it their businesses. This is why plantations had to match or exceed average rates of profit. And such profitability required cost competitiveness with the operations of other planters, all of them locked in conflict for market share.

As they devoted more and more land to specialized commodity production, planters became increasingly reliant on world markets for the imported goods necessary to reproduce the plantation and its workforce. In the West Indies, Richard Dunn observed, "The island planters imported almost everything." Their bulk imports included flour, beef and pork, salt fish, wheat and barley, beer and wine, tobacco and paper, iron wares and nails, knives and hand tools, barrels, sugar-making equipment, clothing, boots and shoes, ribbons and hats, stockings, rugs, guns and powder, earthenware, glasses, soap—and slaves, always the slaves. Such imports could only be purchased by means of money, or through credit, which simply meant a deferred monetary payment. And money in sufficient amounts could only be acquired by producing export crops for world markets. In every sense, then, the planters were thoroughly *market dependent*. Their plantation economies could survive and grow only via the mediation of the market. Outputs—agricultural crops—had to be monetized precisely because purchases and loan payments had to be made in cash. Genovese acknowledged as much, noting that Southern planters depended on banks "to facilitate cotton shipments and maintain sound money." And, he continued, "They purchased large quantities of foodstuffs from the West and . . . had to pay in bank notes."[25]

Sugar, coffee, tobacco, cotton, wheat, rice, and indigo cycled through markets, both local and global. At every stage they bore prices; at every step money was their measure. While the sites of production were agrarian, the circuits of goods and finance inevitably moved through towns. "With its merchants, shippers, and country stores," writes one historian, "the town served primarily as the nucleus of a vast and decentralized marketing system that tied the products of slave labor into the international

economy." As planters borrowed money to finance their production; as they assumed debts to purchase land, enslaved laborers, seeds, farm equipment, and more; and as they marketed their goods, they built a "market culture" dominated by monetary evaluation and production for profit. Once goods were finished in field, mill, distillery, threshing barns, fisheries, and more, planters sold them for money, measured their value in money, produced accounts in monetary units, typically paid off their debts in money, and computed profits in money. A quick survey of plantation account books shows, as we have seen, an obsessive preoccupation with quantitative measure and monetary accounting. What two historians say about Edmund Scarborough II, one of the wealthiest Virginia planters of the mid-seventeenth century, applies to the bulk of his class: "Making money seems to have been the major passion in Scarborough's life." And this passion was not idiosyncratic; it was merely a subjective manifestation of an objective necessity. As Charles Post puts it, "To meet their debts and avoid the loss of their land and slaves, the planters were compelled to 'hold their place' in the world-markets for sugar, tobacco, rice, indigo, coffee and cotton through cost reduction."[26]

In the terminology of Marxist political economy, by the second half of the eighteenth century (and much earlier in some areas), plantation-based commodity production was increasingly subject to the law of value, to the necessity to match average times and efficiencies of production—*socially necessary labor time*—if planter capital was to survive and expand. This meant that "cost minimization," that favorite of microeconomics textbooks, governed the system. In turn, pressures to minimize costs fostered persistent innovation—in seed strains, crop rotation, tools, ploughs, mills, and especially in the organization of labor—even if these confronted the classic limits of technical change in agriculture. This is why we see secular declines in prices for both cotton and sugar throughout much of the half-century before 1860. In the case of tobacco, the declining trend for prices began much earlier—in the 1620s—and continued across the rest of the century. Yet, Chesapeake tobacco planters still turned a profit as prices fell thanks to a continuing rise in the productivity of labor and a rapid growth in market demand. From 720 pounds of tobacco annually per worker in the 1620s, output rose to 1,600 pounds for each laborer fifty years later. Meanwhile, regional tobacco exports soared.[27] A typically capitalist pattern of profitability due to increasing output per worker had materialized, notwithstanding price declines. As the Atlantic plantation system was consolidated in the next century, technological improvements enabled

planters in sugar and cotton to exhibit the classically capitalist capacity to turn a profit in the face of *falling* prices—again due to intensification of labor, innovation, and increases in labor productivity—none of which would have been possible without direct control over collective work processes.[28] All of this was taken to a higher level during the era of "the second slavery" (1790–1860) to be discussed in chapter 10.

This ability to ratchet up productivity in the face of lower prices indicates that slave-based plantations involved a modality of the *real subsumption* of labor by capital. It is vital to clarify the significance of this. Marx develops the concept of labor's subsumption in order to distinguish the multifaceted ways in which capital takes control of work processes originally developed outside its control. For instance, rural families in early-modern Europe often spun textiles in their homes. As the scale of textile production and exchange expanded, seventeenth-century merchants established control over the *marketing* of these homespun goods. Merchants like these would buy raw materials and deliver them (with instructions as to quantity and quality) to nominally independent household producers, from whom they would purchase the finished product.[29] For Marx this *putting-out* system—where a merchant puts out work to rural households and then collects their product—is an example of the *formal* subsumption of labor by capital. Merchant capitalists control the end product and dictate quality criteria to domestic workers. But they do not have control over the work process itself; they do not supervise its pace or dictate its hours. Domestic producers have been made economically dependent on capitalists, but the latter have not seized control of the work process itself. This contrasts with the *specifically capitalist mode of production*, where capital "*revolutionizes* their actual mode of labour." This does not have to do with technology per se. The foundation of real subsumption is capitalist control and direction of cooperative labor: "Cooperation remains the fundamental form of the capitalist mode of production."[30]

Bringing workers together into large, collective labor processes based on detailed division of labor and despotic supervision is the critical transformation in the organization of capitalist production. No longer are laborers working in their homes, workshops, or on small family plots. They are now centralized into worksites directly managed by agents of capital. Such cooperation, wrote Marx, "is the first stage at which the subsumption of labour under capital no longer appears as a merely formal subsumption but *changes the mode of production itself* . . . these conditions appear as a relation dominating the individual, as a band

with which capital fetters the individual workers." The conditions of work—the rhythm, the pace, the division of labor, the machinery, the organization—all become independent of the will of the workers. The direct producers, be they "free" wage earners or chattel proletarians, are here alienated from the labor process and its conditions, which socially and materially dominate them. In these circumstances, "the relation of subject and object is inverted."[31]

It should be obvious that the commodity-producing plantation belongs to the "specifically capitalist mode of production."[32] Because Marx was predominantly concerned with the path taken by capitalist development in England, he focused on the real subsumption of full-fledged wage labor. But on New World plantations, capital found another form in which to establish direct control over all facets of the production process. Unlike in Europe, capitalists in the New World were not confronted with the need to conquer long-standing modes of labor "developed before the emergence of capitalist relations." By dispossessing and displacing Indigenous peoples, and by purchasing dispossessed Africans, they created pristine conditions for colonial settler capitalism. Certainly, a few decades of settlement and clearing of land were often necessary, during which much production was for subsistence. But once settled, bonded labor could be mobilized to produce commodities under the direct domination of planters. Empowered to construct highly disciplined forms of gang work largely from scratch, planters controlled the work process at all stages. As one historian puts it, "The owner of the land and the capital equipment managed all steps of production through his agent. On the plantation itself, he gave orders for the conduct of all agricultural operations on a day-to-day and hour-to-hour basis."[33]

Unlike rural weavers working in their own homes, plantation bond-people toiled under the *direct* domination and supervision of agents of capital, like overseers. This accords with real subsumption of labor to capital, where large-scale cooperative work brings "numerous workers together side by side in accordance with a plan" under a direction that "is purely despotic."[34] At first, slaveowners tended to increase output and profits by extending work hours and increasing the pace of work. This is a common trajectory throughout the history of capitalism: surplus product is initially augmented by extending working hours (and therefore increasing unpaid work time). From early on, however, large-scale planters also focused on improving techniques of production—from seed strains to crop rotations, from ploughs to mills. Mechanization and improved techniques may have become systemic only in the era after the

American Revolution (1776–81), with the rise of the *second slavery*. Nevertheless, from its inception, planter capitalism was based on the real subsumption of workers to capital, albeit of workers who were legally "unfree."

This is why plantation bonded labor might most accurately be described as a regime of legally *coerced subsumption* of labor to capital. Rather than merely constituted through the economic subordination of workers, coerced subsumption was politically enforced through slave law and "Negro Codes." To be precise, this was a racially defined system of coercive subordination to the capitalist mode of production. In Sylvia Wynter's apt formulation, "The systematic devaluation of the black as human went hand in hand with the systematic exploitation of his labor power."[35]

PRODUCING RACE TO PRODUCE SURPLUS VALUE

My claim that New World plantations were commodity-producing units should not be confused with the market abstractionism of most World Systems theory, according to which implication in the market renders fully capitalist the participating unit, from peasant-farm to merchant trading house.[36] This perspective fails to differentiate among the many forms of integration into the capitalist system. In particular, it elides the distinction between formal and real subsumption of production by capital. My claim is not merely that New World plantations were integrated into the capitalist world economy. I am insisting that the *labor processes* on these estates were directly subordinated to the imperatives of capital and the directing will of the owner-employer. Rather than capitalists deploying market power to *formally* subsume labor processes they did not control, as in household weaving in rural England or jute cultivation by peasants in the nineteenth-century Bengal Delta, New World planters dictated and managed all the essential aspects of the work process.[37]

Gang labor, as we have seen, involved groups of field workers laboring in rhythm from sunup to sundown under exacting supervision.[38] Bonded laborers were regularly divided into at least two gangs, more typically into three (large estates sometimes had four groups), based on their physical capacities for a variety of tasks—such as hoeing, planting, manuring, cutting, and so on. The first gang consisted overwhelmingly of young women and men, who did the hardest work on the estate. Other groups had larger shares of children and older or injured adults, whose tasks were less onerous. Members of each group were required

to maintain a uniform pace set by one or two lead workers—a pace that was backed by the whip. Overall, women comprised a majority of field workers in the Atlantic plantation complex.[39]

The gang labor system predominated in sugar, cotton, and tobacco. And it was more typical of large farms, where labor could be most readily collectivized. As a general rule, only plantations with more than 15 enslaved workers could effectively implement gang labor, and its advantages truly kicked in on estates with 35 or more bondpeople. The overwhelming majority of Caribbean plantations were several times larger than this—and thus primed to reap the rewards of ganging. The fact that a majority of farms in the US South did not meet the gang labor threshold as late as the 1860s can be misleading. After all, nearly 80 percent of all Southern slaves worked on large estates that *did* exceed the limit for efficient ganging. In the case of Louisiana, by the 1850s half of all bondpeople lived and worked on estates of 50 or more chattel laborers. Not surprisingly, gang labor was widespread. Throughout the Caribbean and the US South, therefore, the general trend was for work on commodity-producing plantations to be conducted on the gang principle. The reason was simple: harshly disciplined and collectivized slave labor was more productive per head. And greater output per laborer meant enhanced profits. "Black plantation agriculturalists," note two analysts, "labored under a regimen that was more like an assembly line than was true of the routine in many of the factories of the antebellum era."[40] And this was even more so for the sugar colonies of the West Indies, like Barbados, for Jamaica after 1700, and for Saint-Domingue after 1750, where the average size of plantation workforces was significantly larger than in the antebellum South.

Field labor exhibited all the forces of cooperative work identified by Marx. We have already observed William Dickson's 1789 description of sugarcane holing: "The holes are dug by slaves in a row, with the driver at one end to preserve the line. They begin and finish a row of these holes as nearly, at the same instants, as possible, so that this *equal* task must be performed, in *the same time*." Seventy years later, Frederick Law Olmsted described field workers in the US South. "They are constantly and steadily driven up to their work," he wrote, "and the stupid, plodding, machine-like manner in which they labor, is painful to witness. This was especially the case with the hoe gangs . . . moving across the fields in parallel lines with a considerable degree of precision." Like Dickson, Olmsted too drew attention to the disciplinary agent of this tight coordination: the driver "frequently cracking his whip."[41]

More than just an instrument of brutality, the whip was a tool for the production of surplus value. It was used to enforce exacting control over the pace and coordination of group work. Critical here was the very managerial feature that Marx associated with the real subsumption of labor to capital: a stratum of specialized workers responsible for "direct and constant supervision." We have seen that in Barbados it was men with military backgrounds who "solved the problem of discipline through the application of terror." But by the middle of the eighteenth century, a managerial layer comprising estate managers, overseers, drivers, and bookkeepers had become standard. Across the US South, for instance, one overseer was hired on average for every 20 bondpeople in tobacco and grains, while in cotton, rice, and sugar the standard was one overseer for every 30 enslaved laborers.[42]

While the gang system was the dominant mode of work organization in sugar, cotton, and tobacco, many of its principles could be found within the task system too. In the latter regime, individual workers were assigned production quotas. These "tasks" were often defined in spatial terms, such as completing work on a one-quarter-acre field of rice. The time required was variable, though most planters tried to devise tasks equal to about nine hours of daily labor in the winter and ten in the summer. Once the task was completed, bondpeople could engage in self-directed activities. If they completed a task in eight hours, rather than ten, they were typically free to leave the fields. They might then fish, gather, hunt, tend their own plots, or enjoy leisure activities. So long as they could prevent an increase of tasks, workers might carve out more time for recreation and self-directed work, including work for wages. For this reason, enslaved laborers typically defended tasking against moves toward the gang system. South Carolina's James Henry Hammond, for example, encountered stiff resistance when he sought to convert his estate to gang labor. Having managed to implement ganging, Hammond later partially reverted to the task system as a concession to ongoing enslaved resistance.[43] Yet tasking could also be manipulated to increase production quotas, particularly when planters introduced new crops and new methods of planting and harvesting.

In colonial South Carolina in the mid-eighteenth century, just such changes in rice and corn cultivation—both largely organized around tasking—led to severe problems of overwork and exhaustion. To remedy these, in 1740 the colonial assembly prohibited workdays beyond fifteen hours, longer than those in most gang labor regimes (with the partial exception of sugar cutting and processing at harvest time). In

other situations, planters alternated tasking and gang labor according to seasons, crops, jobs, and production cycles. And frequently, they shifted from one to the other in efforts to intensify labor. Planters in South Carolina, where tasking predominated in rice cultivation, commonly adopted gang labor in the 1740s when they introduced indigo as a cash crop. In Arkansas, the task system dominated in the early going, but by the 1840s large planters had gone all-in for gang labor. During that same decade, Mississippi planter Francis T. Leak, on realizing that his field workers had consistently slowed down, shifted his hoeing gang to the task system in order to speed them up. In the British colony of Demerara, planters shifted to tasking in the nineteenth century in order to reduce costs of supervision, but their efforts provoked resistance.[44] Given that both systems were used to intensify work and boost profits, gang and task labor ought to be seen as variations on a single, albeit complex theme. Sometimes they might be combined on a single estate; in other cases, planters might alternate between them at different times of the year; in yet other circumstances slaveowners might switch from one system to the other. In all cases, the critical problem of controlling labor predominated.

This challenge—to harness, organize, and control labor-power—is common to all forms of capitalist production. In the case of the English factory system, before mechanization could become the route to raising productivity, autocratic control over labor had first to be established. The initial innovations of the English factory system were primarily in this domain—control over labor—rather than that of industrial technique.[45] The initial challenge for capital was, as Marx put it, to establish the "despotic" authority of "officers" who could impose "a barrack-like discipline" upon the work process. To this end, capitalists needed "a real army, officers (managers) and N.C.O.s (foremen, overseers), who command during the labour process." The commodity-producing slave plantation possessed just such a disciplinary hierarchy. "These agricultural enterprises," observed Kenneth Stampp, "with their business directors, labor foremen, and skilled and unskilled workers approached the organizational complexity of modern factories."[46]

In Britain, epochal struggles were required to render millions of workers dependent on the market. For at least three centuries, a class war raged over common lands, forests, fisheries, and grazing grounds. Once direct producers were forced from traditional lands, they lost customary rights.[47] But New World planters could directly purchase Africans who were already dispossessed. They did not need centuries of struggle for the formation of surplus populations disciplined by the

whip of hunger. This is why gang labor was linked to legal bondage, racial differentiation, and managerial violence.

After all, legally free laborers were not going to accept militarized gang labor. Servants from England, for instance, had "succeeded in retaining customary rights to a substantial amount of free time," including Saturday afternoons and the English "old Holidayes." Twelve-hour workdays six days a week were not for them. English miners brought to Virginia in the early 1730s to work in copper pits demanded a calendar that actually included 130 days off. They responded to the more intense work routines of the Chesapeake with slowdowns and sabotage. Servants and slaves, however, had fewer options for resistance. Upon seeing Barbadian sugar estates in the 1650s, Richard Ligon remarked, "I have seen such cruelty there done to Servants, as I did not think one Christian could have done to another."[48] Long hours, physically draining work, discipline by the whip, regulation by a pass system: all of this provoked English workers to spurn the drudgery, violence, and tropical diseases associated with plantation service, especially after the 1660s, as wages in Britain began rising. As one economic historian put it, "The gang system could only be made operational if planters were granted the power to compel labor . . . the labor force of the large plantations remained overwhelmingly slave, because free laborers would not work in gangs at any level of wages that plantations could afford to pay."[49]

This is why racialization must be understood as, among other things, a modality of capitalist discipline. As Christina Heatherton remarks, "the means of securing capital were often indistinguishable from the mechanisms of organizing racist terror."[50] Nowhere more so than during the construction of racial capitalism on Atlantic plantations.

RACIAL FORMATION AS SOCIAL DISCIPLINE

As they worked at dominating Black bonded labor in the fields and developed statutes meant to reinforce these practices, planters were in the process of *race-making*.[51] Virginia in 1670 still regulated slaves under the legal rubric of servitude, perhaps because the colony had twice as many indentured servants as slaves. Ten years later, a law aimed at codifying racial slavery floundered on its basic categories, laying out punishments for crimes committed by "any negroe or other slave," particularly where they raised their "hand in opposition against any Christian."[52] The classifications here were unstable. The statute failed to cement the identity between slavery and Blackness, leaving open the

possibility that there might be slaves "other" than those of African descent, and it defined the opposing group as "Christian," rather than white. Race is still here an "emergent category," one not fully disentangled from religious identity and older relations of servitude. Indeed, in 1680 writer Morgan Godwyn felt obliged to inform his English readers that in Barbados *white* was "the general term for Europeans."[53] The usage was not yet customary.

During this period, legislators frequently aspired to create slave codes capacious enough to include native peoples. In 1682, in the aftermath of Bacon's Rebellion (1676–77), the Virginia assembly passed *An Act to Repeale a Former Law Making Indians and Others Free*. In an effort to keep the bounds of bondage open, the act identified slavery with "negroes, moores, molattoes and others" as well as "Indians taken in warre." In this vein, the colony's 1691 law prohibiting interracial marriage similarly outlawed "negroes, mullatoes, and Indians" from marrying white women. In 1723 we find an act declaring its commitment to "the better governing of Negroes, Mullatos, and Indians, bond or free." When the latter act was amended in 1748, exactly the same phrasing was used.[54] Crucially, however, the 1691 Virginia statute did define as "white," rather than "Christian," those who are other than "negroes, mulattoes, and Indians." It is instructive that "white" was here utilized in efforts to prohibit interracial marriage (and "miscegenation"). After all, the very existence of interracial individuals threatens hard racial distinctions. In this vein, Blacks who were manumitted were given six months to leave the colony since the presence of free Blacks could only confuse the identification of slavery with Blackness. Significantly, all of this was elaborated in a law designed to prevent escapes and insurrections, titled "An Act for Suppressing Outlying Slaves."[55] The differentiation of the laboring classes into distinct racial groups, barred from cross-racial relationships, had become an essential means of preventing insurrection and "outlying" (running away and living outside the plantation). Racialization had become a decisive strategy of social control.

Rather than a fixed structure, we need to understand race as a formation, as a fluctuating process of social differentiation. As much as we know today the end result in the New World—a social cartography of race that mapped whiteness and Blackness onto the distinction between freedom and slavery, while subjecting the Indigenous to eliminationism—this was not yet entirely clear to colonial planters. During the second half of the seventeenth century, we can see the master class "preparing the ground for race without foreknowledge of what would later

rise on the foundation they were laying." Nevertheless, the Barbadian example was spreading fast. That colony's 1661 slave code was quickly adopted in its entirety by Jamaica, Antigua, and South Carolina and in part by Georgia.[56] Every few years saw further acts that tightened the chains of racial bondage. And the logic of these was clear: differentiating the degrees of violence that could legitimately be inflicted upon distinctly racialized bodies. Since enslaved Africans were legally denied the right to hold property, they could not be fined. Punishment would have to be inflicted upon their bodies. Whipping, torture, and murder of Black bodies became cornerstones of law and power. Edmund Morgan notes the brutal logic of slave law in colonial Virginia: "Slaves could not be made to work for fear of losing their liberty, so they had to be made to fear for their lives."[57] The application of power over Black life and death was now an intrinsic part of the New World slave system. For those seeking genealogies of *racial capitalism*, one part of the story surely lies here.

It is vital to keep both elements of this term—*racial capitalism*—at the fore. We are observing racial formation as an infrastructure of capitalist accumulation. As Ira Berlin astutely argued, "The stench from slavery's moral rot cannot mask the design of American captivity: the extraction of labor that allowed a small group of men to dominate all. In short, if slavery made race, its larger purpose was to make *class*, and the fact that the two were made simultaneously by the same process has mystified both."[58]

Atlantic racial capitalism involved the production of commodities by laborers who were legally construed as commodities *themselves*. This was a unique—and uniquely capitalist—innovation in law and social domination. As Jennifer L. Morgan has perceptively noted, having been half-articulated in terms of religion and cultural difference, the ideology of race was reorganized around "the languages of commodity and merchandise." This material and ideological reconstitution meant that "race and capitalism were caught in circuits of reinscribing logics." Blackness was now specifically constructed via the identification of some humans as generic labor-power, mere beasts of burden, nothing more than zombie laborers. Divested of all human qualities, enslaved people were rendered interchangeable units of truly *abstract* labor. Modern racism was formed in that reduction to mere labor-power. As "human-objects, human-commodities, human-money," racialized chattel workers, as Achille Mbembe puts it, had been transformed into "the living crypt of capital."[59]

CHAPTER 4

Living Labor and Planter Profits

My creed as an agriculturalist is to make the greatest possible product, from the least possible labor.

—James M. Garnett, Virginia planter, 1821

There was always a kind of strife between master and slave, the master on the one hand trying to get all the work he possibly could out of the slaves at the least possible expense, and the slaves on their part trying to get out of all the work they could.

—Former North Carolina slave Allen Parker

The "primary purpose" of New World slaves, Sidney Mintz wrote,

> was to serve as manual laborers engaged . . . in the production of market commodities . . . Slaves were not *primarily* a source of prestige, of sexual satisfaction, of sadistic impulses, or of anything else but profit, and profit in a frankly capitalistic system, even though the curious view that slavery and capitalism are mutually exclusive still persists . . . These were no serfs toiling on isolated manors, no captives of war endowing their masters with prestige, but industrial workers whose work was principally agricultural . . . in both their status and their economic function, they resembled the proletarians of Europe more than is often conceded.[1]

This is correct on all counts. Plantation slavery was above all a machinery for the production of profits. Appropriation of surplus labor, objectified in commodities, drove the system. To be sure, the drive to appropriate was often bound up with sadism and love of domination. But the law of plantation reproduction revolved around profit.

PROFITS OF PLANTER CAPITAL

Planters themselves had no doubts as to the profits to be made from bonded laborers. Early on, they were calculating revenue earned "per hand." Samuel Hartlib in 1655 estimated that planters on average accrued an income of £14 per bonded worker in tobacco cultivation. More than a century later, Scotsman James Grant carefully deducted yearly costs of slave purchase and maintenance from output per head in claiming that planters on a "well established" estate could expect an annual profit of £8 per enslaved worker.[2] While these estimates were at best rough and ready, they reveal the focus on costs and profits that defined plantation accounting.

Historians have rightly consulted planter account books for evidence regarding rates of return for New World plantations.[3] As vital as this evidence can be, these records tend to systematically underestimate the output of enslaved laborers in recording the production and sale of *primary* cash crops. Not only were secondary crops generally ignored, so were significant expenditures of enslaved labor in building barns, mending fences, digging canals, spinning, weaving, cooking meals, fishing, cutting timber, and so on. These labors are generally absent from estate accounts, though often evident in diaries. Notwithstanding these limits, data derived from slaveowner records overwhelmingly demonstrate the profitability of New World plantations.

In the case of Barbadian sugar estates in the seventeenth century, Russell Menard has derived average rates of return of 7 to 8 percent annually. Analyzing the Caribbean as a whole, Michael Craton posits plantation rates of return in excess of 10 percent for the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century, followed by modest declines across the last quarter. Richard Follett finds profits ranging between 6 and 12 percent in Louisiana sugar planting in the four decades after 1820, not terribly out of line with David O. Whitten's estimate of just under 10 percent per year from 1850 to 1860. Drawing on records for the US Lower South (Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida) between 1768 and 1810, Joyce Chaplin suggests rates of return on planter investment ranging from 8 to over 37 percent. Taking a single Georgia rice plantation from 1835 to 1847, William Dusinberre documents annual returns of 15 percent, falling to a healthy average of 9 percent across the 1850s. Even when profits were declining on South Carolina and Georgia rice plantations in the years before the Civil War, the largest and most productive estates still garnered returns above 6 percent. Similarly, middle- and large-size cotton planters

in Texas reaped returns on investment of 6 percent or better across the 1850s and 1860s. All of this is consistent with the study by J.R. Ward that documented an average profit rate of 10 percent for the British West Indies as a whole over eighty-five years (1749–1834).

As we would expect, rates were typically higher on the biggest estates. For instance, analyzing two large sugar plantations in Saint Domingue during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Gabriel Debien calculated a rate of return of about 12 percent. In 1773, Henry Laurens, one of the wealthiest and most innovative South Carolina planters, reaped an average return of 15 percent from his many estates. Texas planters with between 20 and 49 bondpeople saw profit rates of 6.5 percent in 1850 and just under 10 percent in 1860. Those employing more than 50 chattel laborers enjoyed considerably higher returns: over 9 percent in 1850 and more than 12 percent a decade later.[4] Profits made on renting out enslaved people reinforce these estimates. Robert Evans found that masters who leased out male slaves in the antebellum South made annual profits between 9 and 17 percent. He suggested, not unreasonably, that the profit rate on rental of bondpeople should be close to that derived from their direct employment. Working with a larger data base, Klas Rönnbäck proposes an average profit rate of 14 to 15 percent for Southern slaveowners who rented out bondpeople.[5] This is undoubtedly too high, as Rönnbäck incorrectly merges potential "capital gains" from appreciation of slave prices with the surplus product (or "net rent") they generated. Deflating Rönnbäck's estimates appropriately gives a real rate of return of between 9 and 11 percent annually.

If we turn to the returns on industrial enterprises fueled by slave labor, we find similar patterns with somewhat higher rates of return, albeit over less extensive time periods. Records from textile mills in the antebellum South display average annual profits of about 16 percent. The renowned Tredegar Iron Works of Richmond, Virginia, reaped profits of 20 percent or better every year from 1844 to 1861. A Louisiana lumber yard earned returns of 12.5 percent and higher between 1846 and 1850.[6]

All of these studies used planter records and accounts of slave-based industrial firms to calculate the surplus of revenue over annual expenses. Extensive data on cotton output, the enslaved population, farm size, and costs of slave maintenance to be derived from the US censuses of 1850 and 1860 also yield useful estimates of the *real surplus* (in cotton) per bonded worker and per field hand.[7] That, of course, is what mattered to planters (and industrialists) themselves: whether their incomes

from slave output adequately exceeded their costs of production. This real profit rate governed plantation accumulation and the living standards of planter households. However, mainstream neoclassical economists often disregard the actual profits upon which the planter class lived, which they characterize as merely an accountant's profit rate. Mesmerized by hypothetical models of the plantation economy that satisfy their assumptions about general equilibrium and perfectly competitive prices, they often gravitate to data on slave prices—not the output of enslaved laborers—for model-building exercises.[8] While it is true that slave prices did rise consistently (albeit quite unevenly) across the history of the plantation system, for reasons which I shall clarify below, to focus on this is a version of price fetishism. What regulated actual Southern credit markets, when bondpeople were used as collateral for loans, were surpluses from slave labor, not short-term fluctuations in slave prices. As one detailed survey of antebellum Louisiana showed, "lending practices were influenced primarily by income streams [from slave labor—DM], not rising asset values."[9]

To focus on the "asset values" of slaves is to substitute the prices of bondpeople for the value of what they *produced*. It is to treat them as simple commodities rather than as commodity producers, that is, living laborers. In assessing plantation profits based on appreciation of slave prices, neoclassicists tend to reify bonded laborers themselves—literally *thingify* them—by treating them as units of capital whose market values are what determine profit or loss. The productive powers of bonded laborers—the fact that they expend living labor to create value and surplus value—are annulled via the attribution of labor's creative powers to capital. In Marx's terminology, this is a form of *capital fetishism*. Just as commodities are fetishized as if their values resided in them as things rather than as products of living labor, so the material elements of capital (machines, land, tools, money) are mystified as if they had the magical ability to generate more capital out of themselves, rather than through their interaction with living labor. Commodity and capital fetishism, with their attribution of labor's powers to things, are reproduced by mainstream economics, for which, as Marx observed, "all the *social productive forces of labour* appear as the *productive forces* of capital, as intrinsic attributes of capital." The fatal error of bourgeois economists is to "emphasize the *objective* elements of production and overestimate their importance as against the *subjective element*, living, immediate labour."[10]

Marx's critical theory hinges on defetishizing commodities and capital—on disclosing the ways in which the latter are in fact products

of human labor. Ironically, however, a series of ostensibly Marxist interventions into the political economy of plantation slavery have succumbed to fetishism, most egregiously so when commentators insist that enslaved laborers comprised *constant capital*.

The claim that slaves were "constant capital" is of Weberian provenance, having been first formulated along such lines by Douglas Hall. In his valuable study of slavery in Martinique, Dale Tomich regrettably invoked Hall in this regard. More recently, the argument that slaves represented constant capital has been advanced by Charles Post in *The American Road to Capitalism*. But perhaps the most disappointing usage of the claim is found in Nick Nesbitt's *The Price of Slavery: Capitalism and Revolution in the Caribbean*, where key Marxist concepts, from labor-power to constant and variable capital, are mishandled. Nesbitt's argument is a purely deductive one: If bondpeople were constant capital, and constant capital according to Marx produces no surplus value, it follows that plantation slaves did not produce surplus value. If this is so, then New World slavery could not have been capitalist. Everything hinges, however, on the assertion that bondpeople were constant capital, which appears five times within the first fifty pages of the work. Unfortunately, a mistaken premise generates a wrong conclusion each and every time.[11] In Marx's terms, enslaved workers actually represent *variable capital* in the production process. The significance of this distinction is of fundamental importance.

LIVING LABOR IN THE PLANTATION ECONOMY

In order to clarify what is at stake, it is crucial to grasp the Marxian concepts of *labor-power* and *living labor*. Marx frequently links the two terms, as in the following passage: "A portion of the *use-value* in which capital appears in the process of production is the *living labour-power itself*." Living labor, he continues, "is a *self-activating capacity*, a *labour-power that expresses itself purposively*." In purchasing labor-power as a commodity, capitalists claim temporal control over living labor in the process of production. However, because capital appropriates the powers of living labor to itself, the distinctiveness of the latter is deeply obscured. In mainstream economics, living labor is treated as just another "business asset," one of many inputs into the work process. It is thus conflated with the material "factors" of production, like buildings, land, and machines. This is the mystification at the heart of the *trinity formula* in which bourgeois economics conceives of

commodities as resulting from the combination of three factors of production: land, labor, and capital.[12] Nonpurposive elements of capital—machines, buildings, land, tools, raw materials—are treated as qualitatively the same as living labor. In this "bewitched and distorted world," humans are reified; living labor appears as just another thing-like input into the business enterprise. To de-reify, as Marx's critical theory does, thus requires differentiating "between the *objective* conditions of labour (the means of production) and its *subjective* conditions, purposively active *capacity for labour*, i.e. labour itself."[13]

Let us underline this point. Marx is urging us not to conflate two quite different productive powers mobilized by capital—those of the material means of production and those of living labor (or labor-power in motion). Otherwise, we risk losing sight of the defining properties of labor-power: the creative, purposive, and subjective capabilities of human beings. As we shall see, this conflation also obscures the origin of surplus value. And if we treat laborers as technical factors of production, we also occlude their capacity for resistance and social transformation. As much as labor-power can be exploited, it cannot be *entirely* appropriated and absorbed by capital—even when the laborer is chattel property. This is because a living personality always possesses will. This critical insight is embedded in the very definition of labor-power that Marx advances in *Capital*: "We mean by labour-power, or labour-capacity, the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in the physical form, the living personality, of a human being."[14]

This brings us to Marx's critical distinction between constant capital (*konstantes Kapital*) and variable capital (*variables Kapital*). Among other things, Marx is invoking the algebraic distinction between known and invariable (constant) and unknown (variable) values. In Marx's critique of political economy, this distinction maps onto the division between the objective and subjective factors of production. Whereas constant capital refers to the expenditures capitalists make for material means of production, variable capital refers to their expenses for human labor-power. The latter, of course, is a capacity of humans with wills of their own. And this, as we shall see, is a critical reason why that value is both unknown and variable.

Let us recall that most of the elements that enter a production process—tools, buildings, machines, raw materials—do not produce a surplus value. Their values (and market prices) represent expenditures of past labor. When inserted into the production of new goods, they merely pass on the values they embodied when purchased. Hoes, plows,

sewing machines, and computers are products of past labor whose values have been predetermined. The value of such "nonliving" means of production is thus effectively *constant* across cycles of production.[15] This is what makes these elements of capital "dead labor." They do not possess the intrinsic potential for growth that inheres in living labor, which can be pushed to create more value than has been expended on it. Rather than merely transmit a predetermined value to commodities, living labor in the capitalist mode of production has the capability to reproduce its own costs *and* create "*new* value."[16]

As dead or past labor, machines, raw materials, tools, and buildings cannot produce more value than entered into their production; none can generate new value, a surplus above their own costs of production. But in purchasing "the living, form-giving fire" that transforms nature and society, capital appropriates a force capable of generating additional value.[17] It follows that the subjective element of capital is variable in the first instance because it generates a value that *varies* from what is paid for its own upkeep: it produces a *surplus value*. And this distinction between the living and dead elements of production applies as much to the work of plantation slaves as to that of wage earners. Bondpeople were not zombies lacking will and subjectivity; they too were living laborers. When planters bought (or rented) slaves, they were making a monetary claim on *labor-power*, the capacity to generate new value, surplus value. Where wage labor and chattel labor are concerned, "labour-power is, in the one case, sold by himself [the worker—DM], in the other, by a third person."[18] But in both cases labor-power is sold. With the chattel slave, however, it predominantly involves sale by another, a slaveowner. In both cases, the purchase of labor-power is intended for production of surplus value by means of the production of commodities.

There is yet more to the story. Because they were not zombies, bondpeople nourished capacities for resisting the dictates of capital. And this resistance affected their costs to planters as well as the value of their output. The costs of reproducing living labor *varied* in response to struggle. A machine, by contrast, costs what it initially cost—and that amount can be amortized over a period of, say, ten years. For accounting purposes, the annual cost does not vary over a ten-year cycle. Not so with laborers. Should workers protest, slow down, or walk off the job for higher rates of pay, this will tend to alter the wage structure (including wages in kind). The historical record overwhelmingly demonstrates, moreover, that enslaved people regularly pressed for improvements in their wages in kind, particularly food and clothing. Documenting a series

of enslaved protests in Berbice for better food and clothes, one historian concludes, "Customary entitlements were inherently unstable and subject to continual renegotiation." Another commentator, drawing on evidence from neighboring Demerara, observes that "customary practices," including provision of food and clothing, were the product of "confrontations and implicit negotiations."[19] Direct action by enslaved workers, even in the face of disciplinary violence, might upset the wage structure, just as their resistance to speed-up or managerial brutality might reduce the surplus product they provided. The costs as well as the value-output of living labor were thus inherently volatile—they were unknowns, or algebraic variables. As much as bondpeople could be sold as capital assets, in the production process they operated as elements of variable capital.[20] But the most compelling evidence that bondpeople were living laborers with wills and subjectivities is found in episodes where they withheld their labor-power. As I show in the next chapter, *constant capital does not strike*. Enslaved people did.

PRODUCTION, PROFIT, AND THE PRODUCTIVITY OF PLANTATION LABOR

Even in the face of enslaved resistance, the plantation complex based on bonded Black labor was a stunning financial success. It raised hours of work, intensified labor processes, and disciplined and coordinated recalcitrant workers. Substantial increases in output and profits inexorably followed. Some of this was achieved by way of what Marx called increases in *absolute surplus value*—the extension of work hours rather than greater output per hour worked. By the time the racialized gang labor system was consolidated in Barbados, bondpeople were performing roughly 3,200 hours of plantation work per year. In the US South, enslaved work hours appear to have been slightly lower; in Jamaica, where enslaved workers may have toiled for 4,000 hours per year, they were significantly higher.[21] Increases in plantation output and profits thus observed the same course followed initially by eighteenth-century factory owners in Britain: extension of work hours. Consider that between 1760 and 1830, the British "Industrial Revolution" was underwritten by an increase in hours per worker of at least 20 percent, and in some cases considerably more. Londoners seem to have worked an average of 40 per cent more hours in 1830 than they did eighty years earlier. Even in British agriculture, where work hours were already long, they jumped about 18 percent over this period. Much of this was

achieved by reducing the number of holidays enjoyed by British workers. By the onset of the French Revolution, for instance, laborers in Britain toiled 300 days annually compared to manufacturing employees in France who reported to work 250 days per year.[22]

But increased plantation output and profits were also due to increases in labor productivity—in output per hour—due, in the first instance, to new modes of discipline that harnessed the powers of cooperative labor. As discussed above, capitalists can derive substantial jumps in output per head by mobilizing workers in groups. The increase here is of a qualitative nature. Sixty workers laboring together will produce significantly more than sixty workers toiling on their own. Cooperative work thus creates "a new productive power, which is intrinsically a collective one."[23] And this collective power was key to the gang system, which reigned supreme in plantation production of sugar, cotton, and rice. By mobilizing the efficiencies of collective labor processes—with their detailed division of labor, harsh discipline, and intense pace of work—gang labor boosted output per hour. Over the period 1674 to 1790, for instance, output per bonded worker doubled in Barbados, much of the increase coming in the first thirty years of the eighteenth-century as the gang labor system was perfected. Evidence from Jamaica suggests a more than 50 percent increase in plantation output per worker over just more than a century (1700–1807). Indeed, in merely two decades from 1755 to 1775, annual output per bonded sugar worker grew by 40 percent in Jamaica, from 500 to 700 pounds of sugar per worker. The case of Louisiana sugar estates is even more striking. In a period of less than twenty years (1831–47), planters there oversaw a doubling of output per slave.[24] Although sugar represented the most mechanized agro-industrial operation based on bonded labor, it was by no means entirely unique. Related practices with respect to work discipline, mechanization, and productivity improvement are found in regions that specialized in rice, cotton, and more.

In the Chesapeake, the new racialized regime of collectivized field labor—based on gang work or on hybrid combinations of gang and task labor—boosted the productivity of slave labor. In Virginia, one servant could tend 1,000 tobacco plants in the 1610s. Eighty years later they could manage ten times that number. On Georgia tidal estates in the 1790s enslaved workers could produce five to six times as much rice as they had on colonial-era inland plantations. Turning to Southern cotton plantations, yields expanded four or five times over in the forty or fifty years after the American Revolution. As slave production moved

into the Lower South, cotton picking rates per worker soared from 50 to 60 pounds per day in the early 1800s to more than 150 pounds per day by the 1830s. And productivity kept rising down to the Civil War, with cotton picked per slave increasing by about 2.3 percent per annum between 1801 and 1862.[25]

Comparative evidence suggests that the refinement of gang labor and its technical elements (including machinery) drove these productivity increases. On intermediate size plantations (16 to 50 bondpeople) and large plantations (over 50 enslaved workers) in the Cotton South, work may have been 75 percent more intense than it was on nonslave farms and small plantations in the same region. One study proposes that enslaved cotton workers were 94 percent more productive than nonslave workers in the Cotton South.[26] To be sure, this increased productivity of bondpeople was enabled by improvements in plows and other tools, greater use of livestock, improved crop rotation, new seed strains, fertilization of the land, drainage, the introduction of machines (such as cotton gins), application of steam power, and so on. Yet technical improvements in the capitalist mode of production invariably involve intensifying and accelerating labor. New cotton strains, like Petit Gulf and One Hundred cottonseeds, flourished because their bolls could be more readily picked by the human hand. Earlier quotas for enslaved pickers had often been set at 50 pounds per day; but with Petit Gulf cotton an adult picker was expected to gather at least four times that amount every workday.[27]

It is true that agricultural production imposes limits on mechanization that are typically not at issue for industrial firms. This has to do with agrarian production in general, not the use of enslaved labor. All agricultural enterprises are subject to specific natural-environmental constraints that require pauses in the labor process during which natural processes must be abided. "This is the case for example with corn that is sown, wine that ferments in the cellar, or material or labour that is exposed to chemical processes, as in many industries such as tanning," writes Marx. As a result, "production time is greater than working time." While biotechnologies can accelerate some of these natural processes, they cannot eliminate them. Furthermore, there are agricultural tasks that cannot be as readily mechanized as can those in manufacturing. This is in part why handpicking still predominates in much fruit and vegetable production in the Global North. On top of this, climates conducive to cultivation of certain crops do not guarantee optimal soil conditions. Across much of the US South, for instance, soils were highly acidic and deficient in vital nutrients—conditions that contributed to

widespread use of shifting cultivation; after a few years of farming, fields were often left fallow as cultivation shifted to new lands.[28]

But the fact that there are unique constraints to agricultural production does not negate the innovations and productivity increases that regularly occurred in planter capitalism. Rather than being inherently stagnant, the planter economy was a dynamic site of technological change. Even during the early phase of largely extensive rather than intensive growth, wealthy planters experimented with the elements of constant capital. They continually developed new seed strains, which were to be of enormous import in both sugar and cotton. They constructed canals and new systems of irrigation, harnessing tidal movements, deploying gates and sluices, and introducing hydraulic lifts. They introduced new plows along with innovations in milling and grinding. In cotton production, they oversaw continuous improvements to gins, presses, and feeders. In locale after locale, they sought out the latest knowledge and inventions in modernizing agriculture, launching scientific societies and publications to that end. Looking at the records for Jamaica and Saint-Domingue in the eighteenth century, two historians conclude that "Caribbean planters were relentless innovators."[29]

During the "second slavery" of the nineteenth century, to be explored in more detail in chapter 10, steam power, the vacuum pan, mechanized mills, cotton gins and presses, and revolutionary new means of transportation, notably the steamboat and railroad, all contributed to more vigorous growth of output in sugar, cotton, and coffee, particularly in Cuba, Brazil, and the US South. Indeed, as the cotton frontier moved south and west in the United States, Mississippi planters saw a sixfold increase in output per slave between 1820 and 1860, in no small measure due to technical innovations. Comparing it to North American agricultural production based on free labor, three historians conclude that the slave plantation was "a dynamic and parallel route to higher per capita output."[30] The same historians posit impressive productivity increases of about 0.4 percent per year in the West Indies over the period 1700 to 1807, a century that included wars, crises, and price collapses. Even if there is some exaggeration in their assertion that "no economic activity in the Old World could match the productivity possible on New World plantations," there is little doubt that the plantation complex was a vigorous and highly profitable sphere of capital investment.[31] Put in Marxian terms, Atlantic slave plantations comprised a dynamic, surplus value–producing sector of the global economy. The proof is in the profits—and the accumulation therefrom.

FRUITS OF PLANTER CAPITAL

The name of the game in the capitalist economy is accumulation. Survival in the battle of market competition requires growth—more workers, more means of production, more output, better tools and equipment—all in an effort to produce more efficiently and thereby retain and expand market share. By turning profit into more workers, more land, more buildings, new tools, equipment, and machinery, surplus value is constantly transformed into capital. This is why the capitalist mode of production has an inherent impulse toward growth and expansion, however irrational. As the scale of production grows, wealth also becomes increasingly concentrated in relatively fewer hands. So it was in the world of plantation production.

For much of the eighteenth century, many of the largest business enterprises in the world were to be found on the plantations of the Caribbean. By 1720, most West Indian bondpeople worked alongside 100 or more fellow enslaved laborers. Fifty years later, especially in sugar, many would have toiled in groups exceeding 200. In Jamaica, the average sugar estate had 99 bonded workers by the early 1740s. By 1834, more than 60 percent of Jamaican sugar estates contained bonded workforces of more than 200. The same was true of the British colony of Demerara, where in 1813 40 percent of all estates contained more than 200 enslaved workers; a good number had 400 or more. Yet in England, birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, workplaces of this size would have been exceptional. As late as 1830, considerably more English workers toiled in homes, small workshops, and on farms than in factories or mills. Even in Britain's cotton mills at the time, the average workforce was about 175 people, fewer than the typical Caribbean sugar plantation sixty years earlier. Shifting our sights to the United States, we observe that not until the mid-1830s did the most advanced Massachusetts textile mills attain the size of a standard sugar plantation (with an average of about 300 employees).[32] Moreover, the largest sugar estates were twice that size, with over 600 men, women, and children toiling in fields, boiling houses, distilleries, curing houses, and large storage facilities. So, when C.L.R. James said of the enslaved sugar workers of the Northern Plain of Saint Domingue that "working and living together in gangs of hundreds . . . they were closer to a modern proletariat than any group of workers in existence at the time," this was no hyperbole—at least where the collective character of working life was concerned.[33]

Integrated plantations not only assembled large concentrations of workers; they also mobilized comparatively large amounts of capital. A late eighteenth-century sugar estate might represent an investment of more than £30,000, and some involved more than twice that amount, at a time when a water-powered cotton mill in England would have cost £5,000 at most, and even a multistory steam-powered mill would have required £10,000 to £20,000. As late as 1846, an English weaving factory with 410 machines could be built for £11,000.[34] It is not just the size of investment that matters, however. As we have seen, both the scale and complexity of their operations, particularly on sugar estates, made plantations among the most sophisticated businesses of their era.

Adam Smith may well have overstated his case in *The Wealth of Nations* when he claimed that "the profits of a sugar plantation in any of our West Indian colonies are generally much greater than those of any other cultivation that is known either in Europe or America." But there can be little doubt that large sugar plantations worked by bonded labor were among the most profitable investments in the Atlantic World. Little surprise, therefore, that they readily found investors, and that large planters were among the richest of British citizens. By the eve of the American Revolution, whites in Jamaica were more than fifty times wealthier than whites in England and Wales on average; they were more than thirty times wealthier than whites in the thirteen mainland colonies.[35]

If the deployment of slave labor was systematically profitable, then we should expect to observe concentration of wealth in the hands of those deploying bonded laborers—with an additional bias toward those with the largest enslaved workforces. Precisely this trend is visible in the sugar-producing regions of the New World plantation system. As early as 1680 a mere 7 percent of Barbados planters owned more than half of all land, servants, and slaves on the island, as we have seen. A more muted version of this trend is evident throughout the US South, where cotton rather than sugar came to predominate. By 1860, slaveholders controlled 95 percent of agricultural wealth in the South. And the greatest concentrations of wealth accumulated in the hands of the largest slaveowners. South Carolina estate inventories and tax and census data reveal that the *percentage* of bondpeople owned by masters with more than 100 slaves doubled over a thirty-year period. During the decade 1736–45, planters deploying more than 101 chattel laborers owned 12 percent of all slaves. By 1766–75 they owned more than 26 percent of all enslaved people. Those owning 51 to 100 slaves managed to hold

their own. But all other slaveowners lost ground relative to the largest planters. Similar trends applied to landholding. In Alabama and Mississippi in both 1850 and 1860 respectively, the richest 5 percent of the population owned roughly one-third of the land. Slaveowners became wealthier the more slaves they owned—both absolutely and relatively.[36]

We see these trends on display at Worthy Park plantation in Jamaica during the second slavery. After inheriting Worthy Park, Rose Price came to Jamaica in 1791, where for three years he reorganized the estate. Price first doubled the area under cultivation. He also increased ratooning (the use of buds on stubble after a harvest to restart a cycle of sugarcane growth) while more intensively fertilizing the soil. In tandem, he bought more slaves, expanding the bonded workforce from 338 to 528. He also intensified the labor of these bondpeople, speeding up work in the mills and fields and building new cattle pens, trash houses, and roads. The results were irrefutable. Worthy Park's annual output rose from 248 hogsheads of sugar and 85 puncheons of rum in 1790 to 468 hogsheads of sugar and over 500 puncheons of rum seven years later. Price's investments paid off with continually rising output for years to come.[37]

More than anything else, it was the increase of the bonded workforce that drove planter accumulation. As one Northern observer wrote about the Southern Cotton Kingdom, "To sell cotton in order to buy negroes—to make more cotton to buy more negroes, 'ad infinitum,' is the direct tendency of all the operations of the thoroughgoing cotton planter." And what is this but the capitalist imperative identified by Marx—"Accumulate! Accumulate!"—manifest in the context of the New World plantation complex?[38]

Capital accumulation is not simply the piling up of stocks of labor-power, however. While planter concentrations of labor-power and land tended to increase over time, so did their accumulations of physical capital (or what Marx called *fixed* and *circulating capital*). In a detailed study of probate inventories in the Carolina low country, William Bentley found that slaveowner capital—measured by holdings of livestock, manufactured goods, tools, capital goods, crops, and other plantation commodities—more than doubled between 1722 and 1762 (from £325 to £720).[39] Rather than wasted through debauchery and conspicuous consumption, planter surpluses were overwhelmingly reinvested in new means of production—in both living labor and constant capital. Based on his analysis of Southern rice plantations, William Dusinberre cuts to the heart of the matter: "This is what capitalist development is all

about—the increase of labor productivity by combining an ever-increasing proportion of capital with the labor of an individual worker so that the laborer's product becomes much larger."[40]

PRODUCING SURPLUS VALUE

The claim for capitalist development returns us to the terrain of Marxian economic analysis, a distinct weakness of work in the new history of capitalism. This is manifest in confusion about basic Marxian concepts and in the surprising neglect of one of Marx's most crucial theoretical formulations regarding New World slavery.

I am thinking here of an illuminating comment Marx makes about slave prices. Analyzing the economic basis of land rent ("ground rent") in the capitalist mode of production, he turns first to the problem of the price of land. As land is not the product of human labor—even if work can *augment* its market price—its value is not simply determined by abstract human labor. Since it is not a capitalistically reproducible commodity, land cannot be produced in greater quantities, particularly in specific qualities and locations, in response to increased demand. Instead, land is a finite natural resource that is subject to monopolistic ownership—which is why its owners can exact a rent for its use. But what determines the price of such land? In capitalist conditions, argues Marx, the price of land is simply the capitalized value of "anticipated rent." To estimate the price of commodified land, then, we *capitalize* the rent it produces, that is to say, we treat future rents as if they were an existing asset. So, if the anticipated annual rent over a typical turnover period (say twenty years) is $1,000, then the market price of that land will be $20,000, everything else being equal.[41] Marx then insists—in a radical break from the fetishistic concepts of mainstream economics—that the capital invested in purchasing land "has nothing at all to do with the capital invested in agriculture itself. It forms part neither of the fixed capital nor of the circulating capital." The actual capitalist relationship of production involves expenditures in structures, materials, and supplies of labor-power that enter directly into the production process. What ownership of land procures is "a title" that enables the owner to receive a rent, that is, to collect a share of the total surplus value produced by the deployment of labor and other means of production on this land.[42] Rent is thus a monopoly exaction upon total surplus. And where the agrarian capitalist and the landowner are the same person (or entity), rent is simply absorbed into profit on capital.

Marx then reminds us that the same principles apply to the price of a slave, but with a distinct difference. Like quantities of land, human beings (potential bearers of labor-power) are not produced by abstract labor, meaning that they are not produced as commodities.[43] Unlike land, however, human laborers are producers of surplus value, rather than rent. In a capitalist context, "the price that is paid here for the slave is no more than the anticipated and capitalized surplus value or profit that is to be extracted from him."[44] Whereas the price of land is the capitalized value of anticipated *rent* payments, the price of a slave is the capitalized value of anticipated *surplus value*. In each case, the expected surplus is treated as an asset ("capitalized") in order to derive a price. For Marx, the prices for land and slaves represent "real anticipation" of future revenues. This is because both land and labor-power constitute actual social-material means of production. In this sense, they are unlike purely fictitious capitals, such as financial derivatives, which are largely speculative wagers on movements of asset prices. "*Anticipation* of the future—real anticipation—occurs in the production of wealth only in relation to the worker and the land," Marx writes. He further argues that capitalists can often reap greater surplus value through "premature overexertion and exhaustion" of the worker, just as they can by exhausting the land. Wage laborers and commodity-producing chattel slaves both enter a capitalist calculus that trades off their lifespans (premature death) by overwork in pursuit of surplus value. Prices for chattel laborers will thus be governed by anticipated years of productive labor multiplied by surplus value per annum.[45]

Lewis C. Gray, the great historian of Southern agriculture in the United States, intuited something of this when he observed that slave prices represented "the prospective series of annual incomes from the ownership of a slave." Gray further recognized that these incomes derived from the physical and value surplus produced by the bonded worker—a surplus above and beyond their subsistence and maintenance costs.[46] Although Gray lacked a robust theory of value, he intuited Marx's decisive insight: that a commodity-producing enslaved laborer is a producer of surplus value. Since the bonded worker is *capitalistically* exploited, their market price is a function of anticipated surplus value. Just like wage labor, the work of commodity-producing chattel slaves is *capital-positing* labor; it involves surplus labor objectified in commodities that can be reinvested as capital.

If this account is correct—and, with it, Marx's theory of slave prices as capitalizations of anticipated surplus value—then we would expect

to see slave prices increase systematically in tandem with rising productivity and profit per bonded worker. To be sure, these prices will vary with short-term fluctuations in prices for the staple commodities of slave labor, from tobacco to sugar. And large changes in the supply of bondpeople for sale (due to both rates of reproduction and captive imports) will also have an influence, as in 1640–70. But assuming that an active market in human chattel (both internal and external) persists, the direction of *long-run* price movements will tend to reflect changes in worker productivity.

We find just such trendlines in the British West Indies and the antebellum South of the United States, notwithstanding huge increases in the supply of bonded laborers. Richard Sheridan reveals a rise in British Caribbean slave prices of about 225 percent between 1676 and 1775; Richard Pares posits a tripling between 1660 and 1790. Deploying a time series of slave prices from 1805 to 1860, two US economic historians have shown an average price rise from about $300 to $800 (or 266 percent) per enslaved worker in the antebellum South. Another historian plots a near quadrupling in US slave prices between 1807 and 1860 in conjunction with a quadrupling in Southern crop production per slave. During the cotton boom of the 1850s in Texas, the purchase price of bondpeople doubled, as did the hiring cost for bondpeople, even as their supply doubled, a movement consistent with the trajectory of slave prices and hiring rates in the South across the decades 1830 to 1860.[47] These trends are consistent with Marx's claim that slave prices represent capitalizations of future surplus value. If the trendlines for output, surplus value, and profits per laborer were rising, the same should have pertained to costs for hiring and buying enslaved workers—as it did.

To be sure, planters, like most capitalists, perceived these social relations in fetish form. They often assessed the value of slaves in terms of the prices of the commodities they produced, rather than the surplus value ("income stream") appropriated from them. A writer in a Georgia periodical wrote in 1860, for instance, that a long-standing rule for pricing a slave was that "if cotton is worth twelve cents, a negro man is worth $1200.00." But perceptive commentators recognized that commodity prices were not decisive; it was the profit on labor that truly mattered. A Virginian writer in *The Southern Planter* declared it irrelevant to a planter whether the price for slaves is $500 or $1500 per head. Rather, "they are worth to him the actual net products of their labor."[48] The price, be it $500 or $1500, is relevant only in relation to the net product. And so we are back to surplus value.

SURPLUS VALUE AND CLASS STRUGGLE

Due to the unique features of living labor—especially the fact that its bearers possess "strong wills"[49]—the Marxian measure of profitability is never a purely technical one. For Marx, all economic data are drenched in the dynamics of social contestation. Indeed, the concept of the *rate of surplus value* is designed to underscore this. While Marx recognized that the rate of profit governs the cyclical movements of capital investment and accumulation, his concern for the everyday phenomenology of labor and class conflict under capitalism gave him a unique interest in a different ratio, the rate of surplus value. The latter charts the deep cartography of labor under capitalism by mapping the amount of life-energy workers devote to reproducing themselves relative to the amount extracted as *alien labor*, activity that produces only for capital. What the rate of surplus value provides is a measure of the *degree of exploitation* of workers by capital, of the division between labor that merely reproduces workers' costs of production (wages—in kind or in money) versus labor entirely appropriated by capital. The latter, Marx insists, represents capital's appropriation of the time of human life.

To grasp the distinction between the rate of profit and the rate of surplus value, let us follow Marx in indicating surplus value by S, variable capital (the expenditure on wages in money or in kind) by V, and constant capital (expenses for machines, buildings, tools, and raw materials) by C. It is obvious that S/C+V denotes the rate of profit, or surplus value relative to total investment (in both labor-power and constant capital) in a particular period. The rate of surplus value, however, is measured by S/V, total surplus value compared to the costs of maintaining the laborers (the aggregate wage bill) over a period such as a year. This ratio measures the distribution of value newly created in a production process. It expresses the *division* of the laborers' output (and the time of living labor) between the value of what they consume (V) and their output in excess of that consumption, which represents a net surplus (S). We can see the distinction by direct arithmetic comparison.

An annual profit rate (p') of 15 percent can be expressed as p' = 15/100. This tells us that for every $100 invested in constant capital (C) plus variable capital (V), the average profit is $15. But the rate of surplus value is an entirely different matter, as it measures the share of *new* value created in the production process that accrues to capital (S) versus the share that returns to the laborers (V). Now let us take the estimates by John Clegg and Duncan Foley of the labor share of the net product in the

antebellum South. Based on the extensive data available for 1850 and 1860, they propose that the *maximum* share of net product that accrued to bonded laborers was 25 percent.[50] So, for every $100 in new output, $75 accumulated in planter hands, while $25 was used for food, clothing, housing, and so on to maintain workers. This yields a rate of surplus value (S/V) of 75/25, or 300 percent. Now, let us translate this into the temporal terms of a working day. If we assume that bondpeople in the sugar fields and related workshops worked an average twelve-hour day, then they would spend three hours per day producing the value of their consumption goods (necessary labor) and nine hours producing surplus value. The daily temporal expression of the rate of exploitation would be:

$$\frac{\text{9 hours surplus labor}}{\text{3 hours necessary labor}}$$

In other words, three-quarters of all working hours would represent a pure appropriation of labor-time by planter capital. The point here is not the precise accuracy of the ratio. Marx's quantitative measure—the rate of surplus value—is ultimately an index of qualitative relations; it speaks to the existential realities of work and life under the dominion of capital. By producing capital (as surplus value), workers reproduce the very alien power that exploits them: "The capitalist process of production, therefore, seen as a total, connected process, i.e. a process of reproduction, produces not only commodities, not only surplus value, but it also produces and reproduces the capital relation itself."[51] And this relation requires the appropriation of the *time of life* from direct producers. Capitalists not only extract a physical surplus from workers; they also expropriate their life-energies.

Since labor-power is not a thing, but a life force, to appropriate time *is* to expropriate life. That is why capitalist production is a form of living death. In appropriating the very time of life from workers, capital renders their time toiling for capital a sort of *dead time*, a time foreign to life. And nowhere is this truer than in the case of the chattel proletarian. As Ryan Cecil Jobson notes, "In the form of enslaved labor, the black worker was transfigured as pure labor power divorced of all human characteristics." Subjected to the whip as well as the rule of the clock, the bonded worker was compelled to serve as "time's carcase." Under capitalism, notes one scholar, "time is at the centre of domination and resistance in the workplace."[52] And so, as we shall see, was it for the bonded laborers of the New World plantation system.

CHAPTER 5

The Wages of Slavery

> But working and living together in gangs of hundreds on the huge sugar factories which covered the Northern Plain, they were closer to a modern proletariat than any group of workers in existence at the time, and the rising was, therefore, a thoroughly prepared and organized mass movement.
>
> —C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins*

The epigraph above from C. L. R. James serves as a much-needed provocation. It suggests that bonded workers on New World estates composed a "plantation proletariat," to use Sylvia Wynter's evocative term.[1] Such a claim is entirely heretical in many quarters. Legions of commentators, trained in the static protocols of formal logic, have been primed to pounce on suggestions of this sort. The proletarian, they announce, is a "free" laborer. This they have learned, they think, from Marxism 101. A bonded worker cannot, therefore, be a proletarian. QED. Case closed.[2]

In defiance of sterile formalism, I insist that the mature plantation system in the New World was demonstrably capitalist—and its workforce a chattel proletariat. This requires entering the terrain of dialectical theory. To be sure, the term *dialectical* can be thrown around cavalierly. In our context, however, it means elucidating the *relational logics of action* that characterized class exploitation and conflict in the plantation economy. Following the principle that social class is "a historical phenomenon" that "happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships,"[3] I demonstrate that the forms of struggle utilized by enslaved laborers were emphatically working-class in character—practices of resistance that challenged the imperatives of capital, both in the labor process and in battles over time. Of course, not all opposition revolved around work-based conflicts—far from it. But struggles over

both production and social reproduction contested the dictates of capital. Little of this is visible, however, by means of static comparison. I begin, therefore, by examining the dynamism and multidimensionality of Marx's concepts. Rather than linear, these involve, in his own words, "a rich totality of many determinations and relations."[4]

DIALECTICS AND HISTORY

In Marx's critical analysis of capitalism we observe concepts in motion, concepts that become more multidimensional the deeper the analysis probes. The very meaning of the term *commodity*, the concept that launches the analysis in *Capital*, develops across the text, for instance. And Marx is not in the least embarrassed by this fact. He instructs us, for instance, in *Capital* that his initial description of the commodity "was, strictly speaking, wrong."[5] This does not mean that it was without merit. It simply means that the definition was incomplete (one-sided) and in need of complexification. But the defect of the initial definition could only be repaired in the course of an inquiry that brought more elements of social reality into view. For dialectical analysis, every phenomenon we try to grasp in its immediate being eludes us because it is in a constant state of *becoming*. The commodity, for instance, appears at first to be "an extremely obvious" thing, a simple "being." Yet, it quickly reveals itself to be "a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties."[6]

Marx begins by approaching the commodity in a commonsensical mode, as a thing, rather than as an ensemble of relations. Yet his exploration soon reveals that this "thing" is a nodal point in a set of relations. These relations must then be integrated into a richer (many-sided) conception. It follows that the very meanings of concepts develop—become richer, more complex, more many-sided—as the analysis deepens. Truly scientific concepts are thus inherently dynamic. In Hegel's words, "One and the same concept . . . which begins by being abstract . . . retains its character yet [at the same time] consolidates its determinations, again through its own exclusive agency, and thereby acquires a concrete content." Marx declares this dialectical commitment in his 1857–58 notebooks when he proclaims that analysis rises from the abstract (the incomplete and one-sided) to the concrete (the unity of many determinations and relations).[7] As concepts acquire "concrete content," they become more adequate to the many-sided dynamism of phenomena.

This is precisely how Engels understood Marx's investigative process in *Capital*. Introducing the third volume of that work, he urged readers to avoid "the misunderstanding . . . that one can generally look in Marx for fixed, cut and dried definitions that are valid for all time." On the contrary, pursuit of fixed definitions misunderstands Marx's quest for fluid concepts appropriate to the inner development of a historical reality: "It should go without saying that where things and their mutual relations are conceived not as fixed, but rather as changing, mental images, too, i.e. concepts, are also subject to change and reformulation; that they are not to be encapsulated in rigid definitions, but rather to be developed in their process of historical or logical formation."[8]

This Marxian disavowal of "fixed, cut and dried definitions that are valid for all time" drew inspiration from Hegel's dialectical procedure. In the Preface to his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel warned against seeking knowledge based on "rigid, dead propositions." To approach knowledge as a search for inert propositions is to engage in "labelling" and "pigeon-holing everything," a process in which "the living essence of the matter [*Wesen der Sache*] has been stripped away or boxed up dead." In "schematizing" operations of this sort we end up with a mere "table of contents," rather than "scientific cognition" of a dynamic and multilayered reality. The result is a "monotonous formalism" incapable of conceptualizing "the dialectical movement" of our world. Of course, dialectically rich concepts must be developed through rigorous study, they must be "immersed in the material" of the research field.[9] But to do this, to develop dialectically rich concepts, requires abandoning the idealist procedures of much of what passes for Marxism.

Antonio Gramsci, in his critique of Nikolai Bukharin's *Historical Materialism: A System of Sociology*, pinpointed exactly what is at stake. Bukharin had tried to identify a set of timeless sociological "laws" that undergird historical materialism; Gramsci exposed this as an exercise in deductive vulgarization. "The so-called laws of sociology which are assumed as laws of causation," he wrote, "have no causal value . . . A fact or a series of facts is described according to a mechanical process of abstract generalization . . . What is not realized is that in this way one falls into a form of Platonic idealism, since these abstract laws have a strange resemblance to Plato's pure ideas which are the essence of real earthly fact." Discussing the same text, Georg Lukacs remarked that "concrete history will not fit into Bukharin's over-schematic, simplified formula."[10] So it is too with efforts to squeeze the concrete history of plantation slavery into the simplified formulas of formal logic.

With this in mind, let us turn to the much-debated question as to what constitutes a *mode of production* (*Produktionsweise*) for historical materialism. In an illuminating contribution, Jairus Banaji pointed out that Marx used the term in at least two ways.[11] As a simple concept, mode of production refers to the *immediate* relations of production as they appear in a given worksite, be it a landed estate, a workshop, a factory, or a colonial plantation. At this level, the analyst would define a mode of production on the basis, say, of the relation between a surplus-extracting lord and a bonded peasant. Initially it seems obvious that any such relation is "feudal." However, things are not always so simple, as we shall see. This is why, at higher levels of analysis, Marx uses "mode of production" to illuminate the socioeconomic *logic of reproduction* that defines a total system, not an individual site of production taken on its own. Here, we would need to know if the individual estate is producing use-values for the lord, direct tribute for the state, or commodities for world markets. If the latter, then the surplus product is taking the form of commodities that exchange for money on the market. The laws of reproduction of such an estate are, therefore, not simply feudal. As much as this estate appears "feudal" in its immediacy, its economic reproduction is governed by the law of value that regulates the world capitalist market. At this (more mediated) level of analysis, mode of production refers to the dynamics ("the laws of motion") by which a *total system* and its component parts reproduce themselves in time and space. So we now encounter immediately feudal forms that are subject to global capitalist imperatives. However, these imperatives are not directly deducible from the immediate relations operative in individual worksites. They can only be understood by locating individual units within a self-reproducing organic totality. It follows that in some circumstances apparently "feudal" relations between lords and peasants might actually be inscribed within logics of capitalist reproduction. This is why, as we saw in chapter 4, Lenin could analyze bonded labor in Russian agriculture and the Moscow pottery industry from the 1890s as cases in which "the labour-service system passes into the capitalist system and merges with it." An apparently feudal form of bondage based on "precapitalist" relations—"no free contract, but a forced deal"—actually expressed dynamics of agrarian and industrial capitalism.[12]

For Lenin, everything came down to whether bondage was enmeshed in processes of capitalist accumulation by means of the production of surplus value. This of course complicates the equation of capitalism with juridical freedom.

UNFREE WAGE WORKERS: BEYOND LIBERAL ECONOMICS

It is remarkable the degree to which liberal conceptions of wage labor have influenced critical and radical scholars. Nick Nesbitt, for instance, insists that a wage laborer "is always free to quit," elevating legal status above the economic coercion of capitalist relations of production.[13] This misconstrues Marx's critical practice, which begins with the dominant theoretical concepts in a science, such as political economy, and proceeds to deconstruct them en route to their dialectical reconstruction. Beginning from the highest accomplishments of political economy, Marx takes as a starting point the view of Adam Smith and David Ricardo that all modern wealth is manifest in exchange values that resolve into wages, profits, or rents. But he then demonstrates that every one of these categories must be reformulated by means of his critical concepts of abstract labor, labor-power, and surplus value. Because of the initially shared terminology, however, many commentators have missed his rupture with classical political economy and its claim for the ostensible "freedom" of wage labor.

Marx indeed begins *Capital* by referring straightforwardly to the "free laborer." But he quickly demonstrates that this conceptual vocabulary of liberal economics is plausible only within the sphere of circulation of goods. This represents the Achilles' heel of liberal models. For the sphere of circulation (market exchange) obscures the domain of production, where, having sold his "hide," the worker can only expect a "tanning." Marx next demonstrates that the "free" worker is in fact economically *bound to capital*. Increasingly, he puts "free" in scare quotes when describing the wage laborer. And as his analysis proceeds—particularly through the horrors of maimed, sickened, and suffering laboring bodies in factories, mines, and mills—his tone turns bitter about the ostensible "freedom" of the wage laborer. He suddenly insists that the wage worker is "no 'free agent'" and that wage laborers are "bound to their owner by invisible threads." Showing how the labor market keeps the worker dependent on capital, he declares, "In reality, the worker belongs to capital before he has sold himself to the capitalist." To be sure, this sort of systematic *economic* bondage is of a different character from the *legal* bondage of the chattel slave. Nevertheless, lacking any alternative to the sale of their ability to work, the wage worker effectively "belongs to capital." Turning to women and children, Marx insists that here even the semblance of a voluntary contract vanishes, as their labor-power is

typically sold to an employer by the male head of household. In the case of children, he writes, "even the formality of a voluntary sale disappears."[14] These are wage laborers, therefore, who do not enter into voluntary contracts. And even where they do, all wage workers operate in a universe of *economic* coercion. This leads Marx to declare that the proletariat inhabits a new mode of dependence. "The constant renewal of the relationship of *sale and purchase*," he writes, "merely perpetuates the specific relationship of dependency, endowing it with the deceptive *illusion* of a transaction, of a contract between equally free and equally matched commodity owners."[15]

Since Marx's time, a large body of scholarship has documented the legal coercions associated with regimes of "free" labor. We know, for instance, that for two and a half centuries of capitalist development in England (1574 to 1821) between one-third and one-half of all English agricultural laborers worked as indentured servants or apprentices bound to a master, as did tens of thousands of apprentices in manufacturing industries and thousands of orphans and poor children bound out as domestics. "Service itself . . . was almost universal in England," points out one historian, "Legally, anyone who was unmarried, under the age of sixty, and without property could be forced into service." Yet, these people generally received money wages, usually at the end of their terms, along with wages in kind. Similarly, many thousands of sailors bound into coerced labor at sea as a result of impressment and "crimping" nevertheless received wage payments. So, of course, did hundreds of thousands of bonded Asian workers throughout the British and Spanish colonies of the West Indies in the nineteenth-century, as did "coolie" laborers in Louisiana cane fields after the Civil War. As one historian observes, "It was an odd form of 'wage labor' indeed in which the worker had almost the same effective legal status as a slave."[16]

Some might retort that all of this was "precapitalist." Let us remind ourselves, however, that even as Marx was writing his drafts of *Capital* in the 1860s, most wage laborers in Britain and its colonies came under the regulation of "Master and Servant" acts that criminalized workers who left employment early. In fact, roughly ten thousand workers were prosecuted in England and Wales between 1857 and 1875 for such breaches of labor contracts. As Heide Gerstenberger points out, so long as "early" exit from an employment contract was criminalized, wage-labor agreements were "only marginally different from peonage or debt slavery."[17] In British colonial India during the era 1860–1930, hundreds of thousands of wage-earning workers on tea plantations were bound by

laws that also prohibited voluntary exit from employment and subjected them to discipline by the whip. Indeed, Paul Craven and Douglas Hay identify thirty-two statutes across the British Empire "that subjected 'free' workers to penal law or to their masters' will legitimated by law." Returning to the United States, Seth Rockman says of working life in early nineteenth-century Baltimore that "many workers who earned wages did so without any semblance of market freedom." The same was true for freedpeople in Southern areas occupied by the Union army from 1863, as it was after the Civil War, when newly freed people found themselves consigned to sharecropping under "Black codes" that criminalized attempts to leave jobs without employer consent. If found guilty of vagrancy, such "free laborers" could be auctioned off and bound over to an employer. It is difficult to dispute Saidiya Hartman's claim, "The rights of contract and the wage failed to disestablish fundamental aspects of slavery."[18]

Evaluating the history of wage labor in the United States, Robert J. Steinfeld demonstrates that, in the nineteenth century, "wage workers commonly worked under agreements that could *not* be terminated at will" and might be incarcerated for leaving a job without permission. For this reason, he urges, historians need to abandon idealized "types" of labor—such as "free" and "unfree"—as distinct forms with "timeless characteristics." A model built on these lines "reifies labor types, treats them as 'things' with a fixed content, rather than as social/legal practices that might be constructed in a range of different ways." Reflecting on the racialized labor regime of apartheid-era South Africa, Harold Wolpe rightly cautioned, "Within the capitalist social formation . . . all labour-power is in some way and in some degree unfree."[19]

This is why we need historically grounded analyses of the legal coercions to which "free" wage workers were subjected in real processes of capitalist formation—as well as those relations in which enslaved laborers received money wages. That's right, on occasion many chattel slaves did indeed receive wages.

WAGE-EARNING SLAVES

The abundant evidence showing that many enslaved workers received money wages, at least occasionally, has garnered remarkably little sustained analysis. To be sure, historians have frequently *described* such practices. But rarely have they integrated these descriptions into general analyses of the essential relations of New World slavery.[20] It is not my

purpose to provide an exhaustive survey here. But it is worth sampling evidence from planter sources and from enslaved narratives.

Charles Ball wrote a celebrated account of his life after escaping from bondage in the US South. A recurring theme involves his experience of working for wages. Across his fifty years in slavery, Ball did waged labor for twenty different employers. Like many enslaved people, this often entailed "overtime" work on Sundays, for which as a young man he received fifty cents per day. Some decades later, he would earn a dollar and even a dollar and a half for Sunday work and similar sums for picking cotton on Christmas Day. In addition to overtime pay, Ball also earned "bonus wages" for exceeding daily quotas for cotton picking. On one estate, such payments involved half a cent for every pound of cotton picked above the task quota. While Ball usually spent these earnings on food and clothing, like most enslaved people who earned wages, he sometimes put money aside. At one point, he had $10 in savings.[21]

Every practice described by Ball is confirmed by other sources. Speaking of bondpeople on his own estate, South Carolina planter Henry Laurens reported in 1785, "to some of them I already allow Wages." Frederick Law Olmsted, while travelling through Virginia in the 1850s, observed enslaved people working for wages during the Christmas holiday period, toiling in tobacco factories and on railway lines for overtime pay, receiving payment when hired out to other plantations, as well as hiring themselves out for pay on Sundays and holidays. Gus Feaster declared that he "bought candy" with money he earned picking blueberries as a child in South Carolina. Isaac Mason tells of joining with a friend to earn $12 from sawing wood and other tasks at night and on weekends—"liberation money" the friends paid to the Black man who guided their escape. And Louis Hughes received wages when rented out to an Alabama salt works in early 1865.[22] Account books from the early nineteenth century for the Guignard plantation in South Carolina reveal that most field hands earned between three and eight dollars a year for Sunday work ranging from clearing land to plowing, splitting rails, or hoeing. In Adams County, Mississippi, John Nevitts started paying his chattel workers for Sunday labor after several ran away in protest of uncompensated work on the Sabbath. Another Mississippi planter, William E. Ervin, paid bondmen fifty cents a day for work performed during the Christmas holiday period of 1846. The plantation books of South Carolinian planter John Ball show him paying enslaved men twenty shillings for every bushel of seed rice delivered via their own labor. In neighboring North Carolina, bonus pay was typical in the

naval stores industry, where bondmen produced turpentine, tar, rosin, and pitch. One Mississippi cotton planter paid out bonus wages every week throughout the four to five months of the picking season; a field worker who picked 600 pounds of cotton in a day was rewarded with a five-dollar gold coin. At Christmas one year, a cotton-picker on this estate named Nelly received more than $17 in bonus pay. On Louisiana sugar estates, it was common to pay bondpeople for wood, the primary fuel for grinding and milling machines, gathered on their own time. Records from the late 1840s into the early 1860s show some enslaved people receiving fifty to seventy-five cents per cord of wood. Monetary rewards were commonly given there for ditch-digging as well.[23]

Turning to Saint Domingue, Sunday work in the sugar mills, which violated the French monarchy's *Code Noir*, was also compensated. In colonial Martinique, money wages were regularly paid at the end of the harvest, when workers toiled for up to twenty hours a day at milling and boiling. One Martinican lawyer reported that slaves could also earn twenty livres a month for carrying heavy bundles of fodder long distances on their own time. In 1826, a new law in Guyana required wage payment when slaves worked on Sundays, mandating that they be paid *in money*, not in kind. Even where the law did not dictate it, wage payments might be regularized. In the *Farmers' Register* of 1837, Virginia planter J. H. Bernard announced that he took the wages once paid to his now-dismissed overseer to compensate his bondpeople three times a year based on their productivity.[24]

Some of the greatest wage-earning opportunities pertained to hired-out men with special skills. It was not uncommon for employers to split rental earnings with their slaves; in some cases, the enslaved person collected the payment and, by agreement, retained a share. Some slaves were given considerable autonomy not only to hire themselves out but also to find their own lodgings and even to choose employers—so long as they returned agreed-upon sums to their owners. It did not always go according to plan. On occasion, bondpeople might retain all their earnings for themselves or refuse to work for employers they deemed unacceptable. We find Virginia planter Eliza Lucas Pinckney lamenting in 1782, for instance, that she has "not received a farthing for 8 months" from the bulk of her hired-out Black laborers. Not surprisingly, enslaved people with the greatest freedom of movement and independence at work were overrepresented among escapees.[25]

The extent of hiring out, including self-hiring, has often eluded commentators on Atlantic slavery. Slaveowners rarely deceived themselves

on the matter, however. Legislatures across the West Indies and the antebellum South regularly passed laws against it. To no avail. The economics of the labor market persistently overrode statute. Writing from Savannah, Georgia in 1856, Charles C. Jones Jr. informed his father, "There are, you may say, hundreds of Negroes in this city who go about from house to house—some carpenters, some house servants—who never see their masters except at pay day, live out of their yards, hire themselves, without written permit, etc." In Cuba, a large proportion of enslaved people in Havana were hired out regularly. Renting of bondpeople was especially widespread in Jamaica during sugar harvesting and production. Thomas Thistlewood, for instance, routinely leased bondpeople who managed his livestock pens to sugar masters. In Demerara, owners of coffee and cotton estates used the sugar harvest to generate rental income by hiring out bondpeople, often in gangs. These practices allowed for considerable movement of bonded workers across worksites. The Codrington estate in Barbados, for instance, owned an average of 242 slaves during the years 1715 to 1731. But at peak periods, the number toiling on the estate would be about 20 percent higher—roughly 300 chattel workers—thanks to hiring. In November of 1722 alone, Codrington estate managers bought the equivalent of 300 additional days of labor through rental agreements.[26] The flexible labor markets such hiring facilitated could create awkward social challenges, however, especially where it involved self-hiring and money payments.

Waterfront workers figured prominently among those who received wages. The British author Matthew "Monk" Lewis wrote in 1817 of an enslaved Jamaican boatman who hired out his services, pocketing everything in excess of the ten shillings he paid his owner every week. Louisville slaveowner James Rudd collected all the rents on bondmen he leased out for work on Mississippi steamboats throughout the 1850s. Yet he routinely paid them up to ten dollars each for their work on Sundays. James Lackland of St. Louis also leased out a slave named Lewis on a Mississippi steamboat, for which he paid him $3.50 per day for Sunday work. Ferrymen, fishermen, dockworkers, schooner pilots, and others all knew degrees of independent movement rare for field workers. Indeed, their skill, and the maritime authority that came with it, sometimes subverted racial codes. Alexander Barclay, for instance, wrote of "slave captains" of Jamaican coastal vessels "commanding free people." Enslaved maritime workers also participated in both the wage and hiring-out systems. Black waterman Moses Grandy worked as a ferryman, canal boatman, deckhand, and ship captain, beginning in North Carolina, along

the coast, the rivers, and the swamps. Twice, he saved $600 from his wages toward the purchase of his freedom. Twice he was cheated. Finally, the third time, he succeeded. Working as a free Black boatman he next purchased the liberty of his wife and a son. In Vicksburg, Mississippi, Isham Lewis was required to pay his master $20 a month for the privilege of hiring himself out; everything above that amount he could keep himself. While still in his thirties, he had saved $1,400 to buy his freedom. In West Indian port cities like Kingston, Jamaica, waterfront workers who managed their own hiring regularly pocketed money wages. Some managed to purchase their liberty too. But even when things did not go that far, they frequently enjoyed a degree of autonomy unknown to field workers. In 1773, for instance, all the vessels transporting people and goods between Passage Fort and Port Royal, Jamaica, were staffed by Black bondmen completely free of white supervision. It is little surprise that enslaved mariners ran away in higher-than-average numbers.[27]

But the maritime sector was not unique for wage payment. Mississippi planter Benjamin Roach Jr. paid "Negro Tom Knight" $5 in November 1855 for cutting trees and hauling them to the sawmill. Roach noted that Tom had done so "in their own time." On the same document, Roach recorded having paid "Negro John" $2.50 for hauling a wagonload of freight "on Sunday." Tom and John may have been chattel property, but their owner recognized the limits of his power over them; they had "their own time," during which their work would have to be compensated. When J. W. Farley was hired out to a Mississippi timberman, his owner was paid ten cents for the first ten logs Farley cut each day. After that, the bondman himself collected ten cents for each additional log. Farley often pocketed a dollar a day for his efforts, not far off from what white woodchoppers earned at the time. On W. W. Pugh's Louisiana sugar estate, bonded laborers were paid for digging ditches and hauling wood on Sundays and holidays. Across Louisiana's cane fields, workers regularly received wages (both in money and in kind) for overtime hours spent chopping wood, making bricks, barrels, and baskets, and collecting and drying Spanish moss. They were often remunerated for work performed after quotas were met and frequently received post-harvest bonuses. On Samuel Fagot's Constancia Plantation in Louisiana, during the rolling season of 1858, enslaved workers earned $1,047.50 for chopping over 2,000 cords of wood on their own time. "To all intents and purposes," writes one authority, "the slaves at Constancia were selling their labor power." Indeed, given how widespread these practices were, it can be said that "slaves and slaveholders

in Louisiana's sugar country were effectively combining aspects of free labor in a slave-based economy," much as they did on the sugar estates of colonial Brazil.[28]

According to the Jamaican author of *An Essay on Task Work* (1806), landowners in Georgia and South Carolina were "very particular in never employing a negro, without his consent, after his task is finished, and agreeing with him about the payment he is to receive." On the Gay plantation in Louisiana, 160 bondpeople, a quarter of them women, received regular payments for picking Spanish moss, used as a stuffing in upholstered furniture. Between 1849 and 1861, their master paid out an average of $300 every year for such work. Bondpeople there also accrued regular earnings for selling molasses, which they often shipped to market themselves. In Brazil, monetary payment for exceeding work quotas was widespread on coffee plantations in the Paraiba Valley. And on Hugh Hamilton's Jamaican plantations, cash payment for work on Sundays was an established practice in the 1780s. Indeed, failure to respect established customs in this regard was known to provoke resistance and flight. A slave who had fled South Carolina in the 1770s subsequently agreed to work for a North Carolina planter in exchange for "victuals and cloths." Five years later, he escaped from his new master when the latter insisted that Tom pay for his clothes with his Sunday earnings.[29]

Evidence of bonus pay also confirms Ball's recollections. During the cotton harvest, W.H. Evans offered bonuses of twenty-five cents a day for extra picking on his South Carolina estate. When fellow Carolinian planter John Chestnut hired field workers in 1816, he paid them cash for work performed on their own time. William Wells Brown wrote of being hired out at least five times as a young man, and of retaining modest earnings that he carried when he first fled for freedom.[30] In Charlestown, South Carolina, hatters paid enslaved people two shillings and six pence for every fox or raccoon skin they delivered from hunting and trapping on their own time. Bondman Allen Parker described slaves in the North Carolina timber industry receiving bonus pay of $5 to $10. Even George Washington, known for being tight-fisted, would provide payments for extra services. On one occasion, he conferred six shillings on enslaved workers who carried his valet, Billy Lee, after the latter broke his leg while on a surveying mission. And throughout the world of the Mississippi steamboat, something in the range of 2,000 to 3,000 bonded people worked as chambermaids, firemen, deckhands, porters, stewards, cooks, waiters, and barbers. Many of these laborers received

regular pay, sometimes euphemized as "tips," which were just as much wages as are gratuities for hospitality workers today.[31]

Hiring of enslaved workers was also widespread in nonagricultural industries throughout the US South, particularly mining, forestry, tobacco processing, textile manufacture, iron making, turpentine distilling, and railway construction. The South Carolina Canal and Railroad Company had 238 bondmen on its payroll in 1840, all of them leased. Ten years later, the Wilmington and Raleigh Railroad had a largely rented slave workforce of 226. Of the 160,000 to 200,00 industrial slaves in the South during the 1850s, about one in five was leased out—something in the range of 40,000 to 50,000 bonded industrial workers. Andrew Brown's large sawmill in Natchez, Mississippi, used primarily enslaved workers, some of them owned by the company, others hired.[32] Among employers who used enslaved workers in industry and construction, monetary payments were common. A Tennessee turnpike company in the 1850s paid enslaved workers "Stimulant & Reward money" of between forty cents and three dollars per week, while bonded firefighters in Savannah, Georgia, regularly received monetary incentives. In the tobacco factories of Virginia and North Carolina it was established practice to pay wages for overtime work. In Shenandoah Valley forges, bondmen could take home $30 a year in overwork pay, while at the Tredegar Iron Works in Richmond, enslaved workers earned $10 to $15 per month for overtime. Enslaved Tredegar employees also moved around the city with relative liberty after completing their ten-hour shift. At Buffalo Forge in the Virginia Valley too, wage payment to bonded workers was the norm. In 1836, Jim Derest, a teamster, earned $4.87 while Jack Holmes pocketed $11.62 in cash. The following year, Major Watson, who worked at the company's coaling grounds, received $14.83. In 1845, six enslaved men working for the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad Company earned more than $50 each. These men, along with their enslaved coworkers, also received an additional eighty cents each week, with which they were to procure food and housing. By the middle of the 1830s, as many as 3,000 hired-out Virginia bondpeople lived in housing they had acquired for themselves.[33]

While Richmond may have been the site of the greatest independence of movement for Virginia slaves, wage payment to those in bondage was far from exclusive to that city. During the grinding season of 1838, for instance, a Lynchburg mill owner paid cash to at least five enslaved employees on three different occasions. At the Maryland Chemical Works, enslaved laborer Sepio Freeman earned an extra twenty-five

cents for every night shift he worked in addition to his regular wages. Company accounts from both Kentucky and Missouri record wages paid to enslaved workers in rope and bagging factories. And in the timber industry of the Dismal Swamp, bonded laborers routinely received bonus pay and enjoyed considerable freedom of movement outside work hours. Harriet Beecher Stowe was on the mark when she observed that "multitudes" of these timber workers were "hired from surrounding proprietors" and experienced "comparative freedom" relative to enslaved field workers.[34]

Some slaveowners packaged wage payments as an annual bonus, frequently in the guise of a Christmas gift. On the Weehaw estate in South Carolina in the 1850s, many bondpeople received cash "gifts" of $1 to $5 at the end of the year. Writing in *De Bow's Review* in 1851, one Mississippi planter reported giving each of his slaves $5 at Christmas. Louisiana sugar master Francis Surget Jr., one of the richest men in the South, distributed $100 in silver coins at Christmas 1860. On the Stirling family's Louisiana sugar estate, a memorandum from 1854 identified ninety-five slaves as receiving holiday bonuses amounting to $314. This appears not to have been a one-off; records suggest seventy-eight slaves received a total of $258 a year later. On John Randolph's Nottaway estate in Louisiana, bondpeople received total Christmas payments ranging from $150 to $500 during the years 1850–56. At Christmas 1861, an "office servant" employed by the Orange and Alexandria Railroad was gifted with $9. This practice was also observed in the West Indies. On the Codrington and Newton plantations in Barbados in the early nineteenth century, drivers received annual holiday bonuses of up to £20 and two new pairs of shoes each. Jamaican planter Nathaniel Philips regularly doled out an "Xmas box" containing cash to the most productive bondpeople on his Jamaican estate. In 1789, fifty-four of his enslaved workers received a box containing an average of five shillings.[35] For planters, these were meant as displays of generosity and benevolence. But enslaved people treated them as due compensation, often protesting when such payments were not forthcoming. During the holiday season at the turn of the year 1824–25, for instance, ten men at the Niew Vigilantie estate in Berbice refused to go back to work, complaining that they had not been given the quantity of rum and food provisions they customarily received at Christmas. In protest, they walked out of the fields and marched to government offices to complain.[36] Substantial annual payments were not only made at Christmas. On October 25, 1859, over $1,000 was distributed to bondpeople on

the Uncle Sam estate in Louisiana for cutting wood and making bricks and barrels on their own time. On the Gay plantation in the same state, bondpeople received $1,300 in the fall of 1848 for the corn crop they had raised.[37]

Enslaved workers with special skills participated most fully in the wages system. William Dickson maintained that tradespeople in Barbados in the seventeenth century regularly received wages for extra work. "Artificers, when working at their trades," he wrote, were paid "a *bit*, or near 6d. *per* day."[38] On the Mesopotamia estate in Jamaica, skilled slaves, such as coopers, also received wage payments. In Louisiana's cane world, skilled bondpeople regularly received bonuses, particularly after the harvest. On the Gay family's estate in the mid-1840s, the enslaved sugar maker pocketed $30, while his deputy received half that amount. Meanwhile, both the kettle setter and the chief engineer got $10, and a further group of enslaved sugar workers earned $5 each. On the same estate, a slave named Thornton received $20 for making a cart. And on Nottaway plantation in Louisiana, coopers earned amounts ranging from $8 to $19.50 for making barrels and hogsheads on their own time. On a different Louisiana estate, records show enslaved engineer Bill Garner making $75 in wages in 1854 for his services during the rolling season. And on the Barbadian estate of Turner's Hall, one enslaved carpenter in the 1750s was reputed to have left a cash inheritance of £32 or £33 to his son. In Alabama, John P. Parker, an ironworker who was allowed to retain a share of his earnings, recalled having sufficient funds to purchase a hat for $20. Peter Robinson, an enslaved man who operated a North Carolina steamboat, was said by his son to have saved $1,100 from his wages.[39]

None of this is meant to suggest that bondpeople were primarily wage earners. But it is to insist—in opposition to doctrinaire identifications of wage labor with freedom—that work for wages was part of the experience of at least hundreds of thousands of people who were chattel property. This single fact troubles the tidy schematism to which so many commentators adhere. And it requires us to take cognizance of how enslaved people carved out spaces of freedom on a terrain of unfreedom.

CHAPTER 6

Steal Away

Capital on Legs

It is fearful to think that the capital of a nation . . . is on legs, and may some morning turn up missing.

—Daniel Lord

Particularly subversive of the legal framework of chattel slavery was the practice of bonded people hiring themselves out on terms *they* found agreeable. On the opening page of her autobiography, Harriet Jacobs states that her enslaved father, a skilled carpenter, "on condition of paying his mistress two hundred dollars a year, and supporting himself . . . was allowed to work at his trade, and manage his own affairs." Former Mississippi bondwoman Matilda Anderson described how her husband, also an enslaved carpenter, "always hired his own time" in exchange for money or livestock. William H. Robinson reports that his father piloted an oyster sloop and other vessels and was allowed to hire himself out as he saw fit, while returning a share of his wages to his master. Frederick Douglass recalled his time as a caulker, during which "I was to be allowed all my own time; to make all bargains for work; to find my own employment, and to collect my own wages; and in return for this liberty, I was required, or obliged, to pay him three dollars at the end of each week, and to board and clothe myself, and to buy my own calking tools." Abraham Galloway, who would go on to a career as an abolitionist and a spy for the Union Army, was allowed to seek his own work as a bricklayer so long as he paid his master $15 per month. In Charlestown, South Carolina, scores of Black porters and carters found work for themselves and returned an agreed amount to their owners, pocketing the rest as wages. In her diary, Mary Boykin Chestnut described an enslaved South Carolina seamstress who hired out her

services on condition of conferring $5 a month on her owner.[1] In all these cases and more, there lurked the transgressive notion that bonded people could dispose of their own "self."

Mary Turner remarks that, in colonial Jamaica, "the slaves were always ready . . . to work for pay," characterizing such workers as "proxy wage earners." She may have had in mind someone like John Spence's bondwoman Esther, who hired herself out in Kingston as a seamstress and washerwoman. Or perhaps she was thinking of Susan, Elenor, Jane, Ann, and Bell, who moved throughout Port Antonio, Jamaica, hiring themselves out while retaining all their earnings. Slaveowners often had little option but to acknowledge the rights of bonded workers in hiring arrangements. In the early 1850s, a Virginia owner instructed his agent to let a bondwoman named Patty "select a place for herself." In Liberty County, Texas, during the 1860s, W.D. Williams allowed two bondmen to hire out their own time so long as they returned him $25 a month. One found employment on his own in Houston; the other worked the rail cars between Houston and Orange. A Galveston master allowed a slave named Dave to hire himself and to live on his own in hopes he would stop running away. Some enslaved people also negotiated their *terms* of hire. A visitor to Richmond, Virginia, observed a bondwoman refusing a rental arrangement that required her to do gardening on top of household work. Given the frequency of self-hiring, one enslaved woman was able in 1856 to move about Savannah, Georgia, for a month by pretending to have the authority to hire out her own time. In light of such dynamics, Virginian Joseph Hobson concluded that hiring out required "a mutual agreement between master, slave, and hirer" in which "each person" felt "accommodated." As a case in point, hired-out bondman James Armstrong returned his master $5 a week from his earnings in Louisville for seven years, yet took flight in 1853 when his owner raised his share to $7. Even Eugene Genovese conceded that enslaved craftworkers who self-hired "could drive good bargains and pocket substantial earnings."[2]

It is important not to overstate the liberties of self-hiring bondpeople. Moses Grandy piloted boats and managed crews throughout the Upper South, regularly pocketing wages. Yet, this did not save him from being sold five times or from seeing his wife and six children sold away from him. Nonetheless, within the brutal context of chattel slavery, slaves who self-hired might carve out some spaces of semiautonomy. Henry Brown, who worked in a Richmond, Virginia, tobacco factory paid $50 a year so that his wife and their children might live in his dwellings. Some

self-hired bondpeople also decided for themselves how much of their wages they would—or would not—hand over. In the 1820s, Isabella King's bondwoman Bell went eighteen months without returning a cent to her mistress while hiring out in Port Antonio, Jamaica. South Carolina planter Henry Laurens had a series of confrontations over this issue with hired-out workers, whom he accused of failing to turn over an adequate share of their earnings. Fellow South Carolinian Elizabeth Smith placed a newspaper ad in 1740 alleging that a bondman known as Lancaster (who hired himself out as a whitewasher and fisherman) "has lately defrauded me of *his* wages." This is an intriguing verbal slip indicative of the ambiguous status of bondpeople who self-hired. In law, of course, these were not Lancaster's wages; in practice they could be just that. A year later, Elizabeth Smith placed another ad warning employers not to hire Lancaster as he has "been run away for this Month past."[3]

Keeping the whole of their wages, as Lancaster periodically did, seems to have been more common during periods of social turmoil, such as the Revolutionary War and its aftermath in the United States. In 1784, for instance, South Carolinian Sarah DeFollonare complained that her "wench," Nanny, leased out for "three years in Town," had refused to remit wages. To avoid this, some masters let hired workers retain a portion of their earnings as an incentive to remit at least a share of what they received. William Wells Brown recounts one of his owners permitting him to self-hire and granting the same privilege to a skilled bondman named Robert. Not only did Robert hire himself out; he also kept everything above the dollar a day his master demanded. Similarly, the owner of Henry Box Brown's wife Nancy allowed her, for a price, to keep earnings from washing and cooking on her own time. Such arrangements provoked the South Carolina assembly in 1722 to clamp down on wage-earning by bondpeople. And more than a century later, the Texas state legislature tried in 1846 to prohibit bondpeople from self-hiring. Yet, merely five years after that the *Texas State Gazette* was bemoaning that in Austin "nearly half the negroes in town hire their own time." Although outlawed at some point in every Southern state, self-hiring by chattel workers continued unabated.[4]

A significant degree of autonomy was exercised by "term slaves," bonded people whose owners had agreed, often in writing, to manumit them at a future date. Such arrangements were found in cities like Baltimore where opportunities for escape were manifold. Rather than risk losing their whole investment, slaveholders might agree to free an individual after a finite period of service. This gave enslaved people an

incentive to remain in place until expiration of their bondage. And sometimes, they could use their earnings to speed up the process. The owner of the Maryland Chemical Works, for instance, kept a core of fifteen bondmen who used overtime pay to buy their way out of bondage. Scipio Freeman, a term slave at the plant, worked extra shifts in order to obtain his freedom two years before his 1835 manumission date. Yet, even where masters and slaves did not enter such arrangements, hired-out bondpeople occasionally purchased their own freedom or that of loved ones. In Guadeloupe in 1792, a wigmaker bought an enslaved woman and her daughter. Court records later revealed that the bondwoman had actually put up the purchase price of herself and her child—with money saved from wage earnings—and the wigmaker, by agreement, promptly manumitted them both. Two years later, another Guadeloupean bondwoman and two of her children were freed in the same way, as was another enslaved woman named Marie-Thérèse a year earlier.[5]

Catherine Grandy, enslaved in Missouri, hired herself out on a steamboat, returning four dollars a week to her master (slightly more than half her wages). With her earnings she not only purchased her own freedom in the 1840s; she also located her sister Charlotte on a sugar plantation in Louisiana, whose master she persuaded to let Charlotte do the same. They were not the first of their family to buy their way out of slavery. Their father, North Carolina boatman Moses Grandy, had purchased his liberty in the early 1830s. Some years later, he paid for and freed his wife. In Delaware, enslaved cooper Solomon Bayley, who paid to hire out his own time, purchased and manumitted his wife. After great travails, he managed over many years to buy his own freedom and that of his children. Enslaved shipbuilder Abel Ferebee, who self-hired and retained a share of his earnings, bought his wife in the 1850s before she could be sold away from North Carolina. Around the same time, bonded shoemaker Noah Davis of Baltimore earned enough to purchase his own freedom and that of his wife and two children.[6]

FUGITIVE SPACES

Where work for wages did not allow for the purchase of freedom, it might nonetheless open fugitive spaces. South Carolina rice planter Allard Belin, for instance, complained of a bonded worker named Billey, hired to repair his mill, who was able to set his own wages and work schedule. In March 1797, Billey set out for freedom. In the early 1830s, bondman G. W. Offley was hired out to a Maryland railway and

later managed a hotel in southwest Delaware. He disappeared via the Underground Railroad in 1835. In September 1855, an enslaved chambermaid named Celeste, who hired herself out to boats along the Missouri River and the lower Mississippi, made her way onto a vessel working the upper Mississippi. Her master never saw her again. A Kentucky slave named Jerry, said to earn as much as $25 per month on the Mississippi, disappeared on a trip to Illinois in 1851. And William Wells Brown, hired out as a steward on a riverboat, used the occasion of a trip to Cincinnati to steal away. To be sure, bondpeople were regularly leased to brutal and nasty employers, subjected to sexual abuse, or forced into dangerous conditions building railways, toiling in factories, or mining gold. All of which would have enhanced incentives to escape.[7]

Ordinary forms of surveillance frequently faltered when enslaved people were sent to hire themselves out in cities and towns. Virginia bondman Peter Randolph remarked that, in addition to pocketing wages, hired-out workers might "escape the evil eye and cruel lash of the overseer." As a case in point, a New Orleans bondman named Simon moved around the city with a pass from his owner declaring, "The boy Simon is authorized to hire himself on any good boat running between this port and St. Louis or in the St. Louis and Missouri River trade." Such arrangements could be precarious. Missouri slaveowner James Lackney lamented in 1846, for instance, that his bondman Abe claimed to be working on a boat named the *Nimrod*, "but I have no way of knowing when he commenced or what he is getting [in wages]." Lackney later complained that Abe had come into port on the *Tobacco Plant* and "left without leave or license—says he [is] used to doing as he pleases." In 1848, the mayor of Galveston, Texas, rented out six of his bondsmen for work on a coastal steamer. Dropped off on the other end of the island when their duties were done, the enslaved men claimed several carefree days for themselves before they were tracked down. Not all leased-out workers returned, however. Esther, a young Black woman who sold cakes and pies in Kingston, Jamaica, had been gone a full two years by the time her owner placed a runaway ad. Sally Andrews, who peddled fruits and vegetables, had been missing for a full year from the Jamaican parish of St. Andrews before her owner did the same. Many whites, particularly ship captains and watermen, aided such passages to freedom by hiring enslaved workers in full knowledge of their outlaw status.[8]

As much as they benefited from the flexible labor market hiring out provided, many planters were understandably wary of the independence and self-reliance it fostered. Charles Ball wrote that bonded people

who left their plantations on off-days to work for wages became "a kind of freeman on Sunday." A Virginia planter who rented out some of his bondmen as ironworkers bemoaned that they "had too much liberty, and were acquiring bad habits. They earned money by overwork, and spent it for whisky, and got a habit of roaming about and taking care of themselves." In Brazil, some enslaved bakers who hired out their own services garnered enough to start their own businesses. Bondpeople leased to large projects might also mount collective protest. A correspondent for the *South Carolina Gazette* warned in 1763 that hired chimney sweeps had launched a strike for improved wages. "They have had the insolence by a combination among themselves to raise the usual prices and refuse doing their work unless their exorbitant demands are complied with," he lamented.[9]

After experiencing the enhanced autonomy of enslaved people in Baltimore, Frederick Douglass declared, "A city slave is almost a freeman, compared with a slave on the plantation." Yet, there was an enormous qualification. The obligation to share his wages as a caulker in Baltimore's shipyards with his owner "kept the nature and character of slavery constantly before me," he remarked. Nevertheless, Douglass was empowered to find his own housing, buy his meals and tools, and collect his own pay. It is hard to imagine that these experiences did not fuel his yearning for liberty. Indeed, he reacted as "almost a freeman" by imposing a harsh beating on the vicious Edward Covey, to whom he was hired out, when the latter dared assault him. Equally intriguing, when Douglass escaped from bondage, he did so by donning the outfit of that quintessential independent Black man, the free sailor of color, whose type he interacted with regularly on the Baltimore waterfront.[10]

One of the largest slave rebellions in the United States—that of 1800 led by Gabriel Prosser—disproportionately involved enslaved craft workers, like blacksmiths, and bondmen who hired themselves out. As Gabriel's rebellion moved south, enslaved watermen played key roles in the uprising. We find a similar composition among those said to have been aligned with Denmark Vesey's alleged plot twenty-two years later. Throughout the West Indies as well, enslaved and formerly enslaved artisans and skilled workers were routinely found among those who instigated rebellions. Such was the case for leaders of the aborted 1692 revolt in Barbados, for those who organized the 1736 uprising in Antigua, and most famously for Toussaint Louverture in revolutionary Saint-Domingue. In the Antigua uprising, of the eighty-eight bondmen executed for their ostensible roles as rebel leaders, sixty-two were artisans

and domestic workers. In the 1801 uprising in Tobago, the rebel "governor" was a driver and its "colonel" a cooper. All of the three alleged organizers of the fugitive slave community at Negro Fort in Florida had been carpenters. And the slave leader after whom the 1816 Barbadian rebellion is named, Bussa, was a ranger who oversaw activities between estates. The team of insurgents Bussa assembled included a driver, a carpenter, a mason, and a cooper. Jack Gladstone, the leader of the insurrection of 12,000 bondpeople in Demerara in 1823, was a cooper whose rebel command was dominated by enslaved artisans—carpenters, boat captains, boilers, and engineers. And the insurgent leadership assembled by Samuel Sharpe in Jamaica in 1831 was similarly dominated by craftsmen, boilers, and drivers.[11]

ENTANGLEMENTS OF BONDAGE AND AUTONOMY

The rebellious activity of wage-earning slaves counters a liberal misreading of this phenomenon. As much as work for wages, particularly in urban settings, provided social and physical space for heightened mobility, earnings, and personal independence, it did not represent the formation of bourgeois subjectivity. This is Douglas Egerton's error when he correlates Black rebelliousness in the Atlantic World with the "cash power" and "psychological independence" of money-earning enslaved people. Egerton offers a fable of bourgeois progress in which "bright, industrious blacks—such as Toussaint Louverture—could advance their prospects and material conditions of life."[12] Black rebellion and slave resistance are here assimilated to a liberal narrative of markets as spaces of freedom. The result is a sanitized history that elides the coercions of capitalism *and* the most radical elements of the Black freedom struggle in the New World. In fact, urban and rural wage-earning by chattel laborers could equally be seen as generating a certain kind of *working-class* pride and assertiveness. Whatever aspirations for bourgeois self-advancement may have existed, such identities also fostered social solidarities, cooperation, and collective resistance, occasionally of an insurrectionary variety. While strivings for independence were evident, these had a plebeian, even proletarian character, rather than a purely liberal-individualist one. Relatedly, practices of gardening, self-provisioning, and petty trading could be seen as cultivating a rugged sort of peasant consciousness that combined dedication to the advancement of the household with a commitment to the collective well-being of a community locked in conflict with the master class. It

might thus be more productive to explore their struggles as those of a "proletariat with peasant characteristics."[13]

Many of the contradictions of bonded wage-earning are notable where enslaved women are concerned. Pregnant bondwomen were often hired out for domestic work, where they labored under close scrutiny. Notwithstanding such constraints, employers often found them spirited and demanding. Elizabeth Fenwick, who hired enslaved domestics in Bridgetown, Barbados, wrote that the women were "exorbitantly paid" as well as "self-willed" and prone to "pilfering." In another letter she complained that they "pursue a regular course of negligence, lies, and plunder." More to the point, urban domestic workers might find cover for escapes, as did an enslaved woman named Venus in mid-eighteenth-century South Carolina, who worked illicitly as a free washerwoman in Charleston.[14]

Sex work is a considerably more complicated story, and a severely understudied domain of service for wages. Enslaved women were hugely vulnerable to rape and sexual violence. Since commodification stripped the latter of legal presumptions of agency and consent, rape of bondwomen was not a crime, merely an exercise of white male property right.[15] Yet, planter capitalism was also a deeply marketized space in which sexual services could be purchased like any other commodity. This too was an exercise of gender, class, and racial power, and some white men, such as Jamaican overseer Thomas Thistlewood, treated sex transactionally, offering money (and other "gifts") to enslaved women as payment for intercourse. And bondwomen might find some leverage within the severe constraints of these relations of domination. Egypt Susannah, one of Thistlewood's sexual "partners" in the 1760s, saved enough to purchase pigs and cattle. His long-term mistress Phibba (whom Thistlewood rented from his former employer) used her payments to buy property and enhance her family's status. Less than ten years into her relationship with Thistlewood, Phibba owned both land and livestock and had saved £67, from huckstering clothing and baked goods, and by selling gifts received from her master. At her death she also owned two slaves, an extremely rare thing for a bonded woman. Living for thirty-three years as Thistlewood's publicly recognized mistress, Phibba advanced her social standing within the slave order. To be sure, Thistlewood was very much the dominant party in their relationship. Nonetheless, Phibba acquired considerable authority over her fellow bondpeople, and she was able to entertain white women as a near-equal. Her son with Thistlewood was educated at a local school and emancipated at age two. As Dominique Rogers has

stressed, these gains were not the products of white male largesse, but of the resourcefulness of women of color. In many respects, Phibba was an extreme case of a bonded woman who manipulated a long-term romantic and sexual relationship with a white man to some advantage—in a context that reproduced existing patterns of domination even as she *partially* eluded them.[16]

Similarly, Virginia bondwoman Corinna Hinton became the romantic partner of "Negro trader" Silas Omohundro, who often introduced her as his wife. Hinton conducted business on her husband's behalf, and bore and raised five children with him, accumulating cash, gold jewelry, and a diamond ring along the way. On Omohundro's death in 1864, Hinton and her children were all freed in accordance with his will. As Saidiya Hartman notes, these exercises of will and agency were, however, entangled in "a network of exchange, constraint, and property." Intimations of personal sovereignty were subordinated to market norms and the chattel relation. As much as "gifts" of affection, jewelry, status, and money might enhance autonomy, sexual relationships with white men could also tie enslaved women more tightly to their masters, their overseers, or other male members of the planter household, heightening their exposure to beatings and sexual assaults.[17]

In Barbados, sugar planters sometimes rented out women to Bridgetown brothels after harvest season. This could facilitate independence of movement and social interaction, in some cases leading to romantic involvement with white men. Because brothels were "perhaps the most integrated place in the South," and one of the most cosmopolitan, Black sex workers, like sailors, were often purveyors of news and information from across the Atlantic world. And on occasion, the entry of an enslaved woman into marriage or cohabitation with a white suitor could serve as a path to manumission. This was the case for Rachael Pringle-Polgreen, who became proprietor of a hotel and tavern (and a slaveowner) in eighteenth-century Bridgetown. Yet, the number of bondwomen manumitted by white lovers should not be exaggerated. Moreover, as Maria J. Fuentes rightly notes, the brothel did not inhabit a "mode of (sexual) production outside the constraints of the system of slavery." Operating within an economy of gender, race, and class power, the sex trade overwhelmingly reproduced relations of domination.[18]

There was another domain of payment for gendered slave labor—in more than one sense of the term—that merits attention. This was payment for childbirth, both giving birth and assisting deliveries. By the late eighteenth century, the practice of rewarding enslaved women for

birthing seems to have become fairly common in the antebellum South and the British Caribbean. Sometimes reward took the form of additional time off. Plowden C. J. Weston's *Plantation Manual* (1800), for instance, recommended giving Saturdays off to bondwomen who had birthed six or more living children. But monetary payments were also widespread. On the Mesopotamia plantation in Jamaica, mothers of healthy newborns were rewarded with a £1 bonus. Matthew ("Monk") Lewis records paying one dollar to every new mother on his Jamaican estate (fourteen days after delivery of a newborn). On Jamaica's Golden Grove plantation in the 1790s, enslaved women frequently received a quarter of a dollar for each successful birth. In other cases, they might receive gifts such as rum, sugar, pork, or soap. And on Lord Penrhyn's King's Valley estate in Jamaica, the plantation agent paid new mothers and midwifes $2 each, one month after a successful delivery. By 1816, Jamaican law required that masters should allocate £3 after a birth by an enslaved woman, to be equally divided between the mother, the midwife, and the attending nurse. In Barbados too, Dickson claimed in 1770 that "a small matter in money" was paid to both mothers and midwives, which appears to have been the practice on most of the island's large estates.[19]

In the slaveholding colonies of the mainland as well, some masters made it a habit to confer a silver dollar on mothers of newborns. While such payments typically arrived some months postpartum as a reward for keeping offspring alive, few planters delayed for as long as the thirteen months that obtained on Henry A. Middleton's Weehaw Plantation in South Carolina. Some planters also paid enslaved midwives for each successful birth they assisted. In October 1798, George Washington bestowed $10 on a midwife named Nell for assisting at five births. Some decades later, James Henry Hammond of South Carolina included midwives among those skilled workers due to receive a cash bonus at Christmas. In Jamaica, Thomas Thistlewood paid bondwoman Abba at least six times for aiding deliveries.[20]

In addition to assisting at Black births, enslaved women were also regularly hired (or purchased) as wet nurses for white children. As if mimicking the commodification of body parts, Frederic Bancroft crudely described the enslaved wet nurse as a "commodity" meant to provide a "breast for the profit of her owner." Stephanie E. Jones-Rogers is more to the point when she describes the nourishing of white children by Black bondwomen as "appropriation of their breast milk" and of their "nutritive and maternal care."[21]

All of this evidence of hiring, self-hiring, and wage payment belies the opinion of one historian that "a market for labor power (i.e., labor hire) was lacking" in the slave South of the United States.[22] Certainly this market was subsidiary to the chattel relation and pivoted on negotiations among slaveowners. A market it was nonetheless, and a highly flexible one at that, which is why it persisted. Moreover, while largely controlled by the owners of bonded labor-power (not its human bearers), this market included spaces of enslaved self-hiring. The labor market was a regular part of the lives of many plantation workers, and many chattel laborers did in fact regularly bargain over the sale of their labor-power—on Sundays, after the hours of the normal workday, and on holidays. In the process thousands upon thousands of them earned money wages, along with additional wages in kind.

Although they were not foundational to the relation between colonial master and slave, some monetary payments for bonded labor-power were routine. One historian of Louisiana sugar masters suggests, "For the two decades preceding the onset of the Civil War, masters and slaves had effectively combined waged and coerced labor for profit."[23] This combination was familiar in many other sites across the history of capitalism. To be sure, the receipt of wages does not *on its own* make plantation slaves into a proletariat; it is the production of surplus value and working-class forms of resistance that do that. But the reality of monetary payments to bonded laborers disrupts the formalist correlation of wages with free labor. And it reminds us that enslaved people did indeed at times sell their own labor-power. What then are we to make of the claim that bonded workers were constant capital?

INFLEXIBLE LABOR?

In a challenging intervention, Charles Post has argued that plantation slavery could not have comprised a capitalist relation because slaves entered "the production-process as a *constant* element of production." Whereas the recurring purchase of labor-power means that wage earners are inserted into the production process as a *variable* element of capital, says Post, the one-time purchase of a slave makes them part of "the constant costs of objects and instruments of production."[24] I dissent from this claim on both theoretical and empirical grounds.

Whereas wage labor can be shed in response to declining market demand or technological change, Post argues, planters were ostensibly stuck with fixed costs in slaves: "like all pre-capitalist dominant classes,

they were unable to 'expel' labour from production." This argument unwittingly rehearses a shibboleth of neoclassical economists: that only markets in waged work can quickly and efficiently allocate labor, as if it were any other market good.[25] One critic has rightly pointed out, however, that markets in buying and selling slaves served to reallocate labor in just the ways Post attributes to markets in wage labor. A historian of the slave market in the Old South adds, "The slaveholders' attitude to the market in slaves approached quite closely the capitalist hiring and firing process in a crude free-labor market." This is certainly true. But, in missing the greater significance of the slave *rental* market, these historians do not go far enough. After all, the hiring out of bondpeople in the US South appears to have been at least five times more frequent than slave sales. So interconnected were the sale and rental markets that in some cases, both possibilities—sale or hire—were offered by a slaveowner. In Baltimore, fully 15 percent of all slave sale advertisements included the option of renting. Those seeking enslaved laborers could also show flexibility in this regard, as did the prospective owner/employer who in 1819 advertised: "Wanted to purchase or hire, a Colored Woman, or the time of one." It was not at all uncommon for Virginia slaveowners to offer bondpeople for sale *or* hire.[26]

The market in bonded labor thus provided several means of acquiring or shedding enslaved labor-power: renting, buying, or renting to buy. We should also remember the enormous geographic movements of bonded labor-power *within* the New World. As is well known, nearly one million bondpeople were transferred from the Upper to the Lower South of the United States during the cotton boom (1820–60). And after its 1850 abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, hundreds of thousands of enslaved people were relocated from northeast to south-central Brazil. Rather than fixed in place, bonded labor-power was highly mobile. It was also highly liquid. As a detailed study of credit and finance in antebellum Louisiana has demonstrated, investment in slaves was much less sticky than investment in land. This is why slaves were more frequently used as collateral on loans. As a historian of Texas slavery remarks, "Critics sometimes charge that southern money was 'tied up' in slaves, but in fact bondsmen functioned as a highly liquid form of capital. Texas slaveholders counted on being able to convert them to cash whenever necessary." And as we have seen, conversion to cash did not require sale; it could equally involve renting out bondpeople or using them as security for loans.[27]

Let us recall Charles Ball's account of being hired out to twenty different employers over his decades of bondage, John P. Parker's narrative

of employment as a hired ironworker, and William Wells Brown's recollection of being hired out at least five times as a young man. Louisa Picquet too recounted being rented out in Mobile, Alabama, along with her mother and five other slaves; and Isaac Mason described being leased as a teenager to help pay for a debt accrued by his owner. Allen Parker was repeatedly rented out in North Carolina from the time he was a child. Solomon Northup also found himself hired out by his Louisiana master, first as a carpenter, then in 1845 as a field hand, and subsequently as a driver in a sugar mill. Harriet Tubman too was rented out as a nursemaid and domestic laborer. James Pennington was first hired out at age nine to a Maryland stonemason, while his brother was leased to a pump maker. Lorenzo Ivy, a former slave from Virginia, remembered his father, a trained shoemaker, being regularly hired out to different shops.[28] Hiring affected the lives of hundreds of thousands of Black bondpeople. And for planters, manufacturers, mining and timber companies, railroad and canal firms, and wealthy households it provided a fluid supply of unfree labor.

While the market for slave hiring was beneficial to both owners and renters, hiring practices could also enhance the autonomy of bonded people, as we have seen. This is why colonial assemblies regularly tried to stamp them out. As early as 1712, the South Carolina assembly passed a law prohibiting it. To no avail. In 1740 they tried again. This time, one section of the act complained that "several owners of slaves do suffer to go and work where they please, upon condition of paying their owners certain sums of money agreed upon between the owner and the slave." In addition to prohibiting slaves from receiving any share of the rental payment, the act also outlawed chattel laborers from renting their own housing. Once more, the act was a dead letter. By 1751, the Charles Town city commissioners simply required any enslaved person hiring their services to display an official badge while prohibiting them from negotiating their own wages. This policy failed as well.[29]

The advantages to planters of a vibrant market in slave rental were simply too compelling. Lorena Walsh points out that after 1770, as many planters in the Chesapeake transitioned from tobacco to grains, "those who gave over tobacco often . . . began to reduce or at least stabilize their work forces by selling the less productive workers . . . by hiring out surplus hands, by apprenticing out youngsters, and some, by selective manumissions." Thomas Jefferson, for instance, regularly instructed his estate manager to raise revenues by leasing out his surplus laborers. Yet, in order to accommodate short-term demand, many rental agreements on

bondpeople specified that they were to return for a week or two at harvest time.[30] As a result of such flexibilities, slave hiring grew rapidly throughout the region. The increased commodity production of the Revolutionary War era in cloth, munitions, and food further stimulated slave hiring. Shipyards, tobacco factories, grain mills, and warehouses all hired enslaved laborers in growing Chesapeake towns. And public works projects, such as turnpikes, canals, and railroads, generated huge demand for bondmen. In Chesapeake County in 1784–86, of fifty-seven tax-paying households studied, 90 percent either hired or leased out enslaved laborers. In 1838, James Henry Hammond rented out fifteen bondmen for work on a railroad near Columbia, South Carolina. In another Virginia county, fully 34 percent of more than 1,000 slaves were hired out in 1860. By the 1840s, if not sooner, slave leasing was so routine that specialized brokers appeared in cities like Richmond, as did standardized rental forms.[31]

In Louisiana, the collapse of cotton prices in the 1840s led cotton planters to promote rental of chattel workers to sugar masters. Solomon Northup endured just this experience. It is possible that slave hiring took more varied forms in the US South than in much of the West Indies. But caution is needed in this regard. We have evidence of slave hiring as early as 1708 in Barbados, and studies suggest that slaves rented out in jobbing gangs may have constituted fully 10 percent of the enslaved workforce in the British Caribbean. Demand for such gangs, typically the property of nonlandowners, was especially important for cane holing. On the giant Mesopotamia sugar estate in Jamaica, records show steadily rising expenditures on hired bondpeople. Between 1751 and 1777, Mesopotamia managers spent an average of £100 each year for jobbing gangs. By 1798–1808, they were devoting nearly three times as much (£293 per average year) to hiring bonded laborers. Then, in the six-year period 1814–19 the amount leapt again, to an average of £920 per year. As we have already seen, Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica regularly hired out bonded workers who tended his cattle pens.[32]

No doubt, the relative weight of slave hiring was greater in urban centers, as it was in the Lower South of the United States after the American Revolution. As the cotton-growing regions of the Mississippi Valley were opened, and especially after the steamboat came to dominate the river's traffic, cities like St. Louis, New Orleans, Nashville, Cincinnati, Mobile, and Louisville became hiring centers for enslaved people working on the river, the Gulf of Mexico, and their docks. Census returns in Nashville in the middle of the nineteenth century indicate that a quarter of the enslaved people in the city were working on hire; in Louisville,

Kentucky, it was 16 percent. Using newspaper reports from 1858, Frederic Bancroft calculated that between 10 and 12 percent of all enslaved persons in the agricultural counties of Fauquier, Virginia, were hired out; in similar counties in Fairfax, the proportion was twice that. Fogel and Engerman propose that at least 15 percent of bondpeople in the United States were rented out annually. Given the incompleteness of records, overall levels of slave hiring were almost certainly higher, if only because so much of it was done by private agreements that have vanished or escaped inspection. It is not far-fetched when one historian suggests, "The scale of slave hiring was nothing short of monumental."[33]

Slave hiring came in many forms. For year-long leases, it often centered on annual hiring events at courthouses on or around New Year's Day, which may have imitated rural hiring fairs in early-modern England. For enslaved people, New Year's aroused trepidation about dispersal of family and friends. Harriet Jacobs declared that the trauma of "the Slave's New Year" never left her.[34] However, some slaves managed to exercise a degree of control over their hiring. They might threaten to flee if they were leased to a particular employer, actually run off, or press for specific assignments based on previous experiences. When Virginia planter Robert Dunaway insisted on hiring out three enslaved laborers to one employer, they boldly refused and ran off. To avoid such episodes, and the potential loss of their overall investment, owners frequently allowed chattel laborers a degree of input in selecting their employer—as well as a promise of wages.[35]

Not all slave lease agreements took place at public auctions; many hirings were initiated through newspaper ads. Arrangements could also be made via private transactions between neighbors and associates for a plethora of short and medium terms. In towns throughout the French Caribbean, enslaved artisans and domestics were often hired for a week or two at a time. But in one form or another, a large proportion of slave-owning households appear to have participated in markets for bonded labor. George Washington can be found in 1799, for instance, compiling a "List of Negroes Hired from Mrs. French" to supplement the extensive list of Black laborers he owned or controlled by marriage, a reminder that often the wealthiest planters did much of the hiring of enslaved workers.[36]

ONCE MORE: VARIABLE CAPITAL AND LIVING LABOR

It is no overstatement when one historian remarks that, through the hiring market, "slave labor had become a freely moving commodity

that could be bought and sold as needed." Movements in rental costs for bonded workers were highly responsive to market supply and demand, although they trended upward, as did prices for bondpeople, due to the rising income streams appropriated from slave labor. Thomas Affleck's widely used *Planters Annual Record*, discussed in chapter 2, made it easy to see this correlation by providing tables on which the increasing value of enslaved laborers could be recorded alongside daily cotton output.[37] It should be obvious that the costs slave hirers incurred for food, shelter, clothing, shoes, and occasional money wages for bondpeople represented *variable* capital. That these were primarily *wages in kind* does not change their fundamental economic meaning.[38]

"It was in the army that the ancients first developed a wage system," wrote Marx, knowing full well that much of the payment was in kind. Steeped in ancient history, Marx knew that the wages of Roman soldiers were frequently paid in salt. These military wages were known as a *salarium*—or salt payment—derived from the Latin word *sal*, meaning salt. The modern English word *salary* (like *salaire* in French) originates here, in the Roman practice of salt wages. Marx was also deeply familiar with the Swiss economist Jean-Charles-Léonard Sismondi and his book *Nouveau Principes d'économie politique* (1819), to which he refers regularly. In one text, Sismondi describes early nineteenth-century "day laborers" in the Roman Campagna, the lowlands of central Italy. The agrarian capitalist employer, he writes, "owes each man a measure of wine, the equivalent of 40 *baiocs* of bread and three pounds of some other nutritive substance such as salt meat or cheese." Marx would also have been aware of the widespread use of wages in kind as part of the income of farm servants, miners, and others in England and Scotland. As late as 1907, forty years after the publication of the first volume of *Capital*, Britain's Board of Trade estimated that farm laborers in Scotland received 28 percent of their wages as in-kind payments. And around the time Marx's great work appeared, a variegated Cuban workforce of slaves, indentured servants, and conventional wage earners received payment in goods, coin, bills, and shares of output. Wage payments in kind were also widespread during the rise of capitalist relations in Japan, India, and Myanmar.[39]

Of course, capitalists generally convert wages in kind into monetary values for accounting purposes. New World planters did the same. One British commentator reported on James Madison's personal calculations: "The expense of a negro including duty, board, clothing, and medicines, he [Madison] estimates from $12–$13," this writer claimed. John

Palfrey, a sugar planter near New Orleans, calculated that it cost $5 to clothe a ten-year-old enslaved girl every year, with incremental increases for clothing adults. Industrialists in the antebellum South also regularly compared the costs of upkeep for enslaved labor relative to those for wage workers. Caribbean landowners often arrived at a total wage bill by monetizing expenses for food and clothing they provided to Asian indentured workers and then adding these to the money wages these workers earned. One Cuban planter calculated monthly maintenance costs of $15 along with money wages of $4 monthly as the average cost of an Asian bonded worker.[40] By making estimates of this sort, planters, overseers, and bookkeepers were calculating the monetary value of variable capital.

I have noted that workers' compensation is variable also because laborers tend to fight for improvements to their standards of consumption. Take the case of bondpeople's clothing, a persistent source of conflict. In 1793, absentee Jamaican planter Nathaniel Phillips wrote to his overseer that his slaves "have not been pleased with their Oznabrig, Hats & thread this year." Osnaburg was a fabric of fairly stiff cotton twill from which clothing was made. Seven years later, they complained about its quality again. Phillips conceded to the complaints, reporting to his overseer, "Agreeable to my promise to my black friends, I have sent them Blue Cottons." A few years later he wrote apologetically that "the Striped Woollens were shipped for the Women before I understood that they preferred the Blue." By way of amends, he sent an additional order of both blue and gray cotton. In 1819, enslaved people at a coffee estate in Berbice refused to accept the new clothing handed out by the overseer during the Whitsunday holidays, judging it to be of lesser quality than in the past. This owner too made concessions. Bondpeople also pushed to increase the quantity of clothing material as well as its quality. On three of the largest estates in Jamaica between 1793 and 1813, annual disbursements of yards of fabric per bonded child, woman, and man steadily increased, along with the numbers of sewing needles and lengths of thread. To be sure, enslaved people were still inadequately clad. Their clothing was rough, substandard, and replaced much too infrequently. But that it became less so over time had largely to do with the force they brought to bear. And when they pushed for overtime wages and monetary payments for extra tasks, bondpeople often had designs on purchasing better quality and more colorful clothes for themselves and their kin—everything from waistcoats and muslin and calico dresses to bonnets, jewelry, boots, and shoes. All of this entered into planter expenditures for slave maintenance. Costs for slave clothing rations, as for food,

were thus literally variable, fluctuating according to the collective pressure applied by the enslaved.[41]

Variability also affected enslaved production. Every hour of every workday, plantation managers struggled with bonded workers over absenteeism, the pace of work, labor discipline, breaks, food provision, and more. Output and profit were resultants of the vectors of force on each side, expressed most directly in the rate of surplus value. That is why I have insisted that struggles in the fields, workshops, boiling houses, and so on were struggles against the exactions of capital. The anger and frustration of slaveowners and overseers, as well as their willingness to compromise, tended to mirror the intensity of enslaved resistance to efforts to maximize output and surplus value. Slaveholders, in the words of one historian, found "themselves subject to . . . people who mouthed off, slowed down, slipped away, fought back, got sick, and sometimes died."[42]

In light of these realities, it is remarkable how often scholars persist in referring to the enslaved as "fixed" or "constant" capital.[43] At one level, of course, this is not surprising, given that the tendency of slavery is to render bonded persons socially dead. Chattel slavery endeavors to reify persons. And the accounting systems that accompanied it were exercises in *fetishism*—the attribution of thing-like qualities to nonthings, persons.[44] In planter ledgers and account books people were represented as numbered entries, as mere sums of money. And when buying and selling humans, traders deployed tables that rendered enslaved people fully fungible. Pricing bondpeople made possible even "the most counter-intuitive comparisons—between the body of an old man and a little girl, for instance, or between the muscular arm of a field hand and the sharp eye of a seamstress." All other human attributes of enslaved persons—age, height, weight, gender, healthy appearance, strength, reproductive potential, and so on—were translated into a single metric: monetary price. Quality thus became quantity, people became commodities. To simplify matters, some traders crudely used weight as a metric, pricing slaves at a set rate per pound. Here again, the shoulder of a blacksmith was being made interchangeable with the hand of a cotton picker. Via "the alchemy of the market, it had become plausible that human beings could be so drained of social value, so severed from the community, that . . . they could be made freely available in exchange for currency."[45] But all of these practices of reification—quantifying, tabulating, and pricing enslaved people—were disrupted every time enslaved people fought back.

Slowdowns, strikes, absenteeism, escapes, assaults, poisonings, and insurrections were, among other things, exercises in de-reification, affirmations of life against death.[46] Notwithstanding the fetishized entries in plantation manuals, labor logs, bills of sale, and account books, the planter class knew their limits. It is why they passed laws curbing the rights and mobility of enslaved peoples. It is why they organized slave patrols and carried whips and guns. And it is why, notwithstanding their disciplinary apparatus, they regularly accommodated and compromised with bondpeople. In the records and diaries they kept and the letters they wrote, we observe them doing so day in and day out. Their own descriptions portray a social world in which "a significant number of slaves lied, cheated, stole, feigned illness, loafed, pretended to misunderstand the orders they were given, put rocks in the bottom of their cotton baskets in order to meet their quota, broke their tools, burned their master's property, mutilated themselves in order to escape work, took indifferent care of the crops they were cultivating, and mistreated the livestock put in their care."[47]

Bonded people were no ordinary capital. Journalist Daniel Lord discerned as much when he wrote in 1861, "It is fearful to think that the capital of a nation . . . is on legs, and may some morning turn up *missing*."[48] Fearful indeed.

CHAPTER 7

Bonded Proletarians

This is the difference between slave and other property . . .
Slaves may carry themselves off.
—Frederick Law Olmsted

An inclination to treat New World slavery as a system of total domination has played havoc with historical understanding. So one-sided is the analysis that even historians who invoke the idea invariably retreat from it. James Oakes announces in *Slavery and Freedom*, for instance, that "the slave's subordination to the master was *total*." Within a few pages, however, he abruptly declares that "social death did not mean that the slaves had no bargaining chips," which is to say that their domination was *not* total. Similarly, Trevor Burnard pronounces in *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire* that "The impact of slavery was thus absolute." Fewer than ten pages later, he instructs us that, where the master was concerned, "the extent of his power over slaves was far from total," meaning that it was *not* absolute.[1] These inconsistencies are not incidental; they express contradictions at the heart of the capital-slave relation. On the one hand, chattel laborers were commodified, treated in law as mere things. On the other hand, the whole point of their purchase was their activity, the activation of their labor-power. They lived at the junction, therefore, of death and life, of commodification and living labor. As much as they were violently dominated by the planter class, the latter *depended* upon them. Without their work, the plantation machine would grind to a halt. As a result, the terrorism of the slave system could never entirely close off all space for subaltern resistance—in short, for class struggle.

Planters were well aware of the problem. "It is dangerous to hold such property," declared Georgia planter James Carter.[2] It was a common

refrain. To be sure, there was a deep and abiding trauma inherent to the slave condition. And enslaved people were everywhere surrounded by violence and death.[3] Yet, amid hunger, disease, backbreaking work, and the rule of the whip, life defied death.

Colonial law grudgingly recognized as much. For every law that defined those in bondage as property, others treated them as persons who should be held legally responsible (and punished) for their actions. No laws governed the voluntary activity of hoes, barns, or bags of cotton. Yet, the actions of bondpeople, ostensible objects of property, were regulated by legal codes. Every New World slave jurisdiction had rules and punishments applicable to theft, assault, murder, and insurrection committed by enslaved people. If it is true that "criminality is the only form of slave agency recognized by law," it is certain that slave defiance demystified the chattel fetish. When enslaved people were brought to court for attempted escape, theft, assault, murder, and rebellion—as they regularly were—the owning class conceded their will, intelligence, cunning, agency, and personal responsibility. As Elsa Goveia noted for the Caribbean, "the slave was a 'thing' rather than a person . . . except when he was to be controlled or punished." At such moments, enslaved agency, personality, and identity had to be reckoned with. At such moments, the "commodity logic of slavery" confronted "the humanity logic of the enslaved."[4]

The independent economic activity of enslaved people also compelled colonial legislatures to recognize rights and capacities that stood in stark contrast to the chattel principle. In Martinique, a French visitor remarked upon a mango tree in the middle of a sugar field that stunted the cane growing in its shade. He was informed that it could not be cut down as it belonged to an enslaved man determined to pass it on to his descendants. "No master . . . would consider taking away the property of one of his slaves," this observer explained. Throughout the Low Country area of South Carolina and Georgia, property ownership by bonded people—of hogs, chickens, cows, wagons, horses, stocks of corn, crockery, money, and more—was common. In purchasing livestock and garden products from their slaves, rather than simply taking them, planters implicitly acknowledged enslaved property rights. Across South Carolina it was fairly routine for enslaved people to own poultry, carts, horses, fine linen, tobacco pipes, chicken coops, plates, glass items, guns, hogs, beehives, and saddles, among other goods. On William E. Erwin's Mississippi estate in 1855, fifteen slave families owned chickens. One enslaved couple there possessed seven hens, two roosters,

and nineteen chicks. This did not always sit well with the master class. In Charlotte County, Virginia, a group of planters complained that slaveowners permitted their bondpeople to "own, possess, and raise stocks of horses, and hogs" while granting them "all rights of ownership in such stock."[5]

In much of the West Indies, slave property rights were similarly entrenched. On the Codrington estates in Jamaica bondpeople bequeathed cottages, belongings, and gardens to their kin. In addition to houses, gardens, and provision grounds, "most negroes in Jamaica have either fowls, hogs, or cattle; some have all," reported William Beckford, one of the colony's wealthiest planters. In Martinique, chattel laborers possessed cows, chickens, pigs, and rabbits. In Guadeloupe, bondpeople on M. Douville's estate were said to own one hundred sheep. There were even rare instances of slaves owning other enslaved people. Legislatures may have rarely sanctioned such ownership, but convention did. "Their right of property in what they acquire is never questioned, but seems completely established by custom," wrote Bryan Edwards, a member of Jamaica's colonial assembly. In fact, he declared, slaves could "even bequeath their grounds or gardens" to their kin, which was common practice in the French Antilles too. Similar rights prevailed in large parts of the US South. Low Country bondman Joseph Bacon declared after the Civil War that "a master who would take property from his slave would have a hard time," adding that his own "never interfered with my property at all." Eventually, some jurisdictions granted legal protection to slave property, as did British officials in Berbice in 1826. During the same era, the colonial rulers of Martinique authorized inheritance by bonded persons of property bestowed by kinfolk.[6]

While law in the US South rarely sanctioned slave property rights outrightly, court rulings veered close to doing so. In 1792, the Supreme Court of South Carolina ruled that a self-hired bondwoman was entitled to keep what remained of her earnings after making contracted payments to her owner. This, the Court ruled, was *her* money. Beyond the courts, defense of customary rights to goods and land was fundamental to the collective consciousness of bondpeople. As one study puts it, "Slaves were, and viewed themselves as property holders, with the right to keep, protect, and bequeath their possessions and territory. They invested their houses and grounds with the hallmarks of ownership, and these were normally, though tacitly, recognized by planters and their agents." The fact that sugar planters in Jamaica compensated bondpeople when they relocated their provision grounds acknowledged

just such de facto rights.[7] Building a culture etched into material places and spaces of their own, bondpeople simultaneously affirmed their personhoods.

THE PERSONALITY OF LIVING LABOR

Surveying the plethora of Southern laws and codes devoted to regulating, policing, and controlling the activity of bondpeople, James Oakes writes:

> What did slaves do that they were not supposed to do, and do with sufficient regularity to require legislation? They burned barns enough to stir Virginia's lawmakers into action in 1807. They poisoned their owners enough to provoke the Kentucky legislature in 1810 . . . Far more often they left their plantations without passes, forged passes, or simply ran away. Once gone, they committed a variety of petty and not so petty crimes that state and local governments made it their business to prosecute. Slaves were tried for theft and robbery, assault, rape, and murder—all of which raised special problems because the persons involved were not supposed to have "legal personalities" to begin with.[8]

Personhood, as we have seen, is fundamental to Marx's definition of labor-power as "the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in the physical form, the *living personality*, of a human being."[9] And living personalities resist domination. Consider Jamaica in the eighteenth century, where enslaved people on the island would "move around the countryside unsupervised, carry guns, and gather at slave markets on Sunday where they traded, drank, and plotted." As much as property law defined bondpeople as chattel goods, slavery, wrote Virginia planter Robert L. Dabney, "is not an ownership of the servant's moral personality, soul, religious destinies, or conscience; but a property in his involuntary labor."[10] Those moral personalities come through loud and clear when slaveowners described fugitives in newspaper ads. The bondpeople portrayed in such ads were "handsome, intelligent, and articulate; they were artful, conniving, and subtle; they were deceptive, cunning, and ruthless."[11]

None of this is to deny the brutality and dehumanization of the chattel relationship. It is to insist, however, that as living laborers bondpeople could never be rendered socially dead. Situated at the heart of a dialectical tension between life and death, they incessantly defied reification. In building households, kin and social networks, cultures of community and worship, alternative geographies, and oppositional

practices, they sustained vibrant lives in the face of the violence of enslavement. To live as social beings, not mere beasts of burden, affirmed that they possessed "the intelligence and resentments of human beings," as C. L. R. James insisted.[12]

The conundrum for the master class, therefore, was that New World slavery was not a relation of total domination. Domination was a means to exploitation, not an end in itself. Planters needed the labor of their bondpeople—and this gave enslaved people a counterpower. Following the slave rebellion in Berbice in 1763, planters went out of their way to prevent execution of their own bondpeople. As the foremost historian of the rebellion wryly notes, "They did not need to spell out that dead slaves produced no coffee and no sugar."[13] Needing living labor, planters, despite themselves, required human beings with personalities and wills of their own. And this meant that, notwithstanding the grotesque imbalance in the master-slave relation, the enslaved retained a social power of their own. They could always withdraw their labor. They could draw weapons, set barns ablaze, or poison food. They could flee.

After his escape from bondage in Kentucky, Andrew Jackson remarked that a "peculiar character" of slave property is that "it often takes legs and runs away."[14] In the US South some tens of thousands of enslaved people did just this every year, as did large numbers throughout the West Indies, demonstrating that they were anything but constant capital. After all, constant capital does not strike.

CONTESTING THE PLANTATION REGIME

After many years of touring the US South, Frederick Law Olmsted was struck by the frequency with which bondpeople slipped away from their masters. "On every large or moderate plantation which I visited," he wrote, "many slaves had a habit of frequently making efforts to escape temporarily from their ordinary conditions of subjection." He also grasped something of the significance of this propensity to flee. "This is the difference between slave and other property . . . Slaves may carry themselves off."[15]

Probably nothing annoyed the master class more than the absenteeism of slaves. After all, any withdrawal of labor reduced the production of surplus value, the very raison d'être of the plantation system. "I had rather a negro do anything Else than run away," proclaimed one planter. Not only did absences cut into output and profits; flight also had a contagious character. If he did not punish his latest runaway, one planter

explained to Olmsted, "half the people on the plantation would have followed her example." So endemic was running away that some county jails in the antebellum South even printed standardized receipt forms for slaveowner payments to retrieve fugitives. These forms enumerated costs for apprehending fugitives, advertising their escapes, jailing, feeding, and supervising them.[16]

On the Newton and Seawell plantations in southeast Barbados, work logs indicate that up to one-third of all field hands ran away over a two-and-one-half-year period (April 1796 to October 1798). On the Surget family's Morville estate, roughly one-fifth of the workforce ran off in the course of 1855, costing the plantation 543 lost days of labor. Obsessed with curbing runaways, the planter class erected a battery of laws, police practices, and brutal punishments (including castration and the removal of toes or ears) to criminalize unlicensed mobility. As a final resort, they deployed the death penalty. In reality, however, they often accepted absenteeism in the same way that those who manage wage laborers learn to accommodate slowdowns and unauthorized breaks. Agreeing to refrain from violent punishment might induce a fugitive to return, after all. On the Newton and Seawell estates, notwithstanding persistent *marronage*, harsh punishments for runaways were rare.[17]

Nearly a quarter-century before the outbreak of the great revolution in Saint Domingue, the Upper Council of Le Cap wrote: "The slave . . . is incessantly inclined toward marronage. It is his ability to think, and not the instinct of domestic animals to flee a cruel master . . . that compels him to flee."[18] This is an eloquent refutation of the claim that enslaved workers comprised constant capital. For, as the planters of Le Cap understood, it is Marx's "subjective factor of the labor process"—the bondperson's "ability to think"—that is most disruptive. To be sure, the plantation machine violently ground down enslaved people. But in organizing, slowing down, protesting, poisoning masters and overseers, striking, running away, and occasionally rising up, chattel workers mocked the specter of social death.

"All the whips in Christendom cannot drive them to do more than they think they ought to do, or have been in the long habit of doing," bemoaned a Mississippi planter in the 1840s. It was a refrain heard across the world of plantation slavery. A Virginia estate steward, Charles Dabney, ruing the ostensibly lax practices of a previous overseer, complained in 1769 that "the Negroes are very unwilling to give up the privileges they were allowed." Efforts to intensify work processes were especially opposed. In the 1780s, bondpeople forced George Washington

to adjust plans for a threshing floor when they refused to labor in the dusty air of the new work environment. A decade later, then president Washington, again encountering pushback from his slaves, bemoaned that they showed his overseer "no sort of awe . . . of course do as they please." Even a brutal and sadistic planter like Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica had to concede that, on his own estate, "some negroe Sugar Boilers purposedly will make no sugar to get the overseer turned out when they don't like him." Indeed, new overseers were regularly met with slowdowns, escapes, and conflicts as bonded people sought to weaken their authority. But little provoked mass protest more than increases in production norms. Olmsted commented that, in most task work, "custom had settled the extent of the task, and it is difficult to increase it." Try to augment an allotted task, he claimed, and planters risked "a general stampede to the 'swamp,'" in other words, a strike. Bondpeople knew that overseers were expendable—they saw them being regularly hired and fired—and tried to force the dismissal of those they found particularly galling. To preempt resistance, some overseers lightened workloads. In 1772, John Lewis Gervais inspected a Georgia plantation belonging to Henry Laurens. He was startled to discover that the task area staked out by the overseer was markedly smaller than the accepted norm—so much so that bondpeople were doing 20 percent less work than was expected of them. The overseer had disguised his submission to the field workers by surreptitiously shrinking the task area.[19]

Surveying the rich history of struggle by enslaved people in Demerara and Essequibo (initially Dutch colonies, later British ones), historian Emilia Viotti da Costa pronounced that "most of their resistance centered on work." Throughout 1828, for instance, planters filed more than 20,000 reports of "Offences Committed by Slaves in the Colony of Demerara and Essequibo." Two-thirds of these reports complained of slave refusals to work, or deliberate labor slowdowns. Adding in most acts of petty disobedience (as these frequently occurred during work) would bring us to three-quarters of all complaints having to do with the work, or lack thereof, of bonded people.[20] So it was throughout the plantation complex.

One well-documented case of a work slowdown concerns the Hopewell plantation in Lowndes County, Mississippi. During the growing season of 1857, workers in all gangs began slacking off. The hoe gang slowed down so dramatically that the exasperated overseer removed the driver and took over direct supervision of the gang himself. But this simply encouraged the now-unsupervised plow hands to work

less vigorously. Desperate that he might lose the cotton crop in the face of this defiance, the overseer turned to the owner's agent, Richard D. Powell, for help. Upon visiting the estate, Powell realized that the entire operation was imperiled. Rather than order punishment, he negotiated, promising a "good barbecue & one or two days rest" after the harvest. Through direct action, the unruly workers had won more food and rest for their weary bodies.[21]

Identifying work as a site of contestation does not imply that bonded people were typically of a revolutionary disposition. Resistance by exploited classes is almost always tentative, not insurrectionary. However, concerted efforts to limit domination often won immediate gains, like more food and rest. Crucially, such efforts also built cultures of solidarity that sustained morale and self-worth, something historians wedded to rigid distinctions between accommodation and resistance often fail to grasp.

ARTS OF RESISTANCE IN PLANTATION CAPITALISM

Misreading Michel Foucault, Trevor Burnard claims that enslaved people were impotent in their relations with masters since power relations can exist only between free people. Yet Foucault's point is actually quite different. He urges that power always involves a degree of reciprocity, however imbalanced: "Where there is power, there is resistance." Power exists only between persons, not between persons and things. Indeed, "if one or the other were completely at the disposition of the other and became his *thing* . . . there would be no relations of power . . . if there were no possibility of resistance . . . there would be no relations of power." Foucault then adds, correctly, that there are power relations between humans precisely because the latter assert freedom: "If there are relations of power throughout *every* social field it is because there is freedom everywhere." In other words, power exists only where there is a *will* that can be dominated. I do not have power over a hammer or a car. I may have control over them; but these are not *social relations of power*. By contrast, all dominated persons have a degree of freedom, even if this is simply "the possibility of committing suicide, of jumping out of the window or of killing the other."[22] Of course, bondpeople did all of those things. They committed suicide and they murdered masters and overseers. They also expressed their aspirations for freedom in a myriad of less dramatic ways.

In real social contexts, resistance coexists with accommodation in complex and shifting configurations. As a general rule, dominated

people make concessions to the status quo *and* they push back against it. Fear, timidity, and jealousy coexist with courage, audacity, and solidarity. To say this is merely to acknowledge the *complex personhood* of bondpeople.[23] Subaltern opposition is always and everywhere contradictory. Yet, even when it takes nonrevolutionary forms—which is to say, most of the time—pragmatic resistance cultivates elements of defiance and contestation. And these forms of counterpower can nourish cultures of resistance that, in rare circumstances, give rise to insurrectionary upheavals.

Carolyn Fick has shown, for instance, that the insurgent capacities manifest in the revolutionary upheaval of 1791 in Saint-Domingue were nurtured in waves of plantation strikes prior to the revolution. Similarly, the rebellion of 10,000 to 12,000 slaves in Demerara in 1823 was preceded by at least a year of growing combativity and assertiveness by bondpeople. Not only was arson on the rise there, so were running away and showing up late for work. One insurgent bondman reported that slaves on his East Coast sugar estate had been deliberately slowing down, particularly in the mill, in a contest of strength with the manager. Confidence to undertake a general uprising seems to have developed through small acts of defiance.[24]

To be sure, the revolutionary upheavals in Saint-Domingue and Berbice were exceptional. Insurrectionary revolts by oppressed groups are always so. It is critical, therefore, to appreciate the quotidian practices that curtailed the authority of masters and overseers. To see the "small victories" of enslaved people as basically "ephemeral," as does Burnard, is a "condescension of posterity," to borrow E. P. Thompson's term.[25] It is not simply that the quality of life was improved with every extra ration, every visit with loved ones, every payment for extra work, every additional day away from field work for expectant mothers, every chicken pilfered from the henhouse, every unauthorized night of revelry in the forests, every illicit prayer meeting. More than this, all of these required planning, organization, and camaraderie—integral elements of the solidarity that sustained community life and identity. Rather than ephemeral, the effects of microresistances were often enduring. Through oppositional practices and their cultural repertoires, enslaved people developed a counterpower to that of their masters and overseers. Their arts of resistance set limits to the appropriation of their time, energy, and surplus product by the planter class. "The hidden transcript is not just behind-the-scenes griping and grumbling, it is enacted in a host of down-to-earth, low-profile strategies designed to minimize appropriation."[26]

The effect of small victories was often cumulative, solidified in customary standards recognized by both laboring and appropriating classes: more food, better clothing, fewer hours in the fields, money for overtime work, enhanced opportunities to visit and socialize, limits set on physical cruelty. Established norms—enforced through repertoires of resistance—comprised a sort of "unspoken contract." And violations of these were likely to be met by escalating defiance. In his *Considerations on Negro Slavery* (1824), Alexander McDonnell cited an estate manager in Demerara who remarked, "No class of people are more alive to their own rights than the slave population of this country . . . If slaves are curtailed in the least, either by mistake or design, of the time allowed them for breakfast or dinner, or made to work at improper hours, or punished on trivial occasions, they do not fail to make complaint of it." In the rare case of Berbice, where enslaved people could legally file complaints against their masters, we hear echoes of their grievances. In testifying against her master, bondwoman Jeanette, from Providence plantation, told Berbice officials that "we like to have a little time to eat and drink."[27] Such things may seem "ephemeral" to well-fed historians. But gaining a little more time to eat and drink was real and meaningful, a reclaiming of time for life rather than forced labor.

CONSTANT CAPITAL DOES NOT STRIKE: RUNAWAYS, RESISTANCE, AND LABOR PROTEST

One analysis of the oppositional practices of enslaved people in the French Caribbean groups them into three broad categories. The first of these involves low-intensity day-to-day resistance, such as work slowdowns, deliberate damage to tools, and petty obstruction. On the next level are the more disruptive activities that comprise *petit marronage*, followed by the highest level of resistance, *grand marronage*. These terms share a common linguistic origin with the English noun *maroon*, which refers to those who escaped from slavery.[28]

Marronage describes all escapes from enslavement, from the most individual and fleeting to the most collective and long-term. Under *petit marronage*, historians typically include running away for short periods of time (usually no more than a few days or weeks), often in order to negotiate changed conditions of work and life. Rather than aiming at a permanent escape from the plantation, most runaways intended to return. They protested conditions of work and life by withdrawing their labor for short periods, which generally required fleeing from the con-

trol of overseers and owners. As an ex-slave from Virginia recounted, "Runaways! Lawd yes, dey had plenty of runaways. Dere was two kin's of runaways—dem what hid in de woods and dem what ran away to free lan'. Mos' slaves jes' runaway and hide in de woods for a week or two and den come on back." On the Morville Plantation in Concordia Parish, Louisiana, at least one-quarter of the enslaved workers escaped at some point during the average year. Most of the time at least one bondsperson was missing, and on one occasion seven slaves—10 percent of the workforce—were absent. On average, these escapes lasted fifteen days. By the late 1850s, at least 50,000 escapes by individuals likely occurred every year across the antebellum South—ranging from a day or two of absenteeism to permanent journeys to freedom. Taking flight was thus a mass phenomenon, even if a minoritarian one.[29]

The vast majority of fugitives left the plantation as a form of protest: to evade discipline, protest poor food or clothing, find a reprieve from field work, object to the violence of an overseer, resist a sale of kinfolk, or stand up for spouses, children, and others in the community. In taking flight, however, they changed the rhythms of everyday life by withdrawing labor and living off the land (or the town). In Jamaica, Thomas Thistlewood's bondwoman Sally ran away several times a year, usually for a couple of days at a time. Ordinarily she fled to protest an injustice, as she did on at least three occasions after Thistlewood sexually assaulted her. In a study of 3,558 fugitives in colonial South Carolina, Philip D. Morgan determined that four times as many sought temporary refuge—usually in the company of family members and friends in towns or on other estates—rather than a lasting escape from bondage.[30]

Everywhere, slave law harshly punished runaways. In Barbados, where in the early years slaves frequently fled in the company of servants, increasingly severe punishments were enacted for escapes and rigid pass laws were developed to prevent them. Colonial legislatures in Virginia, South Carolina, and beyond imitated these Barbadian slave codes. Alongside law, slave patrols were created, and "slave catchers" proliferated. Still, the enslaved kept running. Of more than 3,000 slaves held at the Savannah, Georgia, jail between April 1809 and May 1815, 86 percent had run away or were being held for "safe-keeping" to prevent them from absconding. In the latter case, they were either picked up by the Savannah Watch as suspected fugitives or turned in by owners and overseers as flight risks.[31]

Notwithstanding the battery of laws, security measures, and punishments meant to discourage escapes, probably 7 to 8 percent of all enslaved

people took flight every decade in Jamaica and Trinidad, a proportion that is in line with evidence for South Carolina. For bondpeople in urban and maritime settings, rates were almost certainly higher.[32] Much flight from the estates, as I have suggested, was a form of labor protest. Many historians have rightly referred to these absences as strikes. But for chattel workers to withdraw labor usually required physically withdrawing *their persons*, that is, escaping. So long as they were absent, so was their labor-power. When fugitives returned, it was often with hopes that overseers and masters would make concessions. Sometimes, promises to this effect were proffered to induce them to reappear. In this respect, absenteeism involved collective bargaining. "Absenting themselves," writes a historian of Virginia, "they withdrew their labor and obedience—going on strike—either seeking refuge at nearby quarters or hiding out in the woods near home. . . . After a time of defiance, everyone knew that such runaways would be back, often on negotiated terms."[33]

Although the vast majority of chattel strikes occurred in agrarian settings, bondpeople also fought back on industrial sites. Runaways plagued the operation of iron-making factories in Virginia, where slave labor predominated. And organized sabotage shut down Buffalo Forge near Lexington on July 28, 1860. Tobacco factories too felt the sting of sabotage, arson, and absenteeism. On occasion they confronted coordinated strikes, as in 1846 when bondman Jasper Woodman and other rebels walked out of their workplaces in Richmond.[34]

Full of advice on the "management of slaves," planter periodicals recommended ways to prevent such escapes. They rarely seemed to help. "It did not seem to matter whether they cajoled, chastised, or severely punished offenders; whether they threatened to sell, trade, or transfer loved ones; whether they gave cash payments, allowed special privileges, or permitted visits to town. Whatever method they tried, slaves continued to run." So persistent was the phenomenon that one New Orleans physician racially pathologized it as a Black disorder—*drapetomania*—defined as "the disease causing Negroes to run away."[35]

Runaways were frequently taking exception to the whip. When asked in 1857 by a Louisiana overseer if he had refused to be flogged, an enslaved man named Samuel responded, "Yes, by God, I did, and I am not going to be whipped by anybody, white or black." Around the same time, a Mississippi overseer told Frederick Law Olmsted, "Some negroes are determined to never let a white man whip them, and will resist you when you attempt it." One Mississippi fugitive had fled, Olmsted learned, after assaulting an overseer for whipping him. On William

Dunbar's Mississippi estate in 1837 a young North Carolina slave named Washington was said to be "in the woods" after raising his hoe to an overseer who threatened to whip him. A Virginia bondwoman reported that "if they were treated too cruelly our folks would always run away and hide in the woods." Sometimes such flights from brutality became long-term escapes. Charles Ball, for instance, met a fugitive named Paul, who had been hiding for two years after enduring a beating. The same pattern prevailed in the French Caribbean where, according to Jean-Baptiste Labat, "The fear of punishment often makes them flee and take to the woods." Hundreds of escapees interviewed by vigilance committees in the United States named cruel punishment as a primary cause of their flight.[36]

But as much as they ran away from brutal conditions of work, escapees were often running *to* something: kin, friends, and lovers. In eighteenth-century Virginia, at least one-third of fugitives ran off to temporally reconnect with family members.[37] Jamaican slaveowners knew this pattern well; their newspapers ads typically sought fugitives in the vicinity of family members or close friends. When sold away from previous estates, bondpeople often set out to reunite with lovers and kinfolk. If the latter resided on their own estates, runaways "almost always kept in the neighborhood, because they did not like to go where they could not sometimes get back and see their families," one Lower Mississippi Valley overseer told Olmsted. Bondman Thomas Taylor, sold to a New Orleans master in April 1839, made four escapes inside of a year, endeavoring each time to return to his wife in Natchez. Bondpeople knew that most attempts at permanent flight were unsuccessful, though some may have obtained precious time for reunions. Others clearly succeeded, however. In January 1817, a North Carolina bondman named Randol fled after his wife was moved to another state. A year later, he was still at large. Famously, Harriet Tubman initially stole away with two brothers before returning for her parents and other siblings. In Jamaica in the 1820s, flight to visit friends and kin became a chronic issue at the Mesopotamia estate after it acquired over 100 slaves from the Springfield plantation, a ten-mile walk away. Within a year, as many as a dozen of these bonded people were staying near Springfield for a week or more at a time. Five years after they were moved, the estate attorney discovered that 20 of the bondpeople brought from Springfield were missing entirely. Even rumor of impending sales was often enough for people to take flight. On the Catharinasburg plantation in Berbice, 226 chattel laborers "retired from the state into the

bush" in November 1828 upon learning that they had been mortgaged for sale. After downing tools and fleeing, they demanded to be sold together, rather than dispersed, in order to preserve their community.[38]

While escape involved spatial movements, fugitives were also remapping the *political economy of time*. Hours, days, and weeks that would otherwise have been consumed by estate labor were redirected to renewing bonds of kinship and friendship by visiting parents, spouses, children, siblings, and lovers. In nineteenth-century Barbados, runaways were twice as likely to be harbored by family members as by nonfamily acquaintances. Short-term disappearances were also opportunities to rest bodies worn out by grinding labor and to steal food in hopes of boosting calorie intake and overall well-being. Time was reclaimed for self-provisioning—hunting, fishing, poaching—in lieu of work for masters. If avoidance of punishment was a major cause of escape, so was theft of food, as Thomas Thistlewood discovered repeatedly on the Jamaican estates that he managed during the 1750s.[39] In withdrawing for days or weeks from coerced and alienated labor, runaways thus reallocated their energies to *social reproduction*, to renewing and cultivating intimate social bonds and procuring food for themselves rather than producing cash crops.

Men may have more often slipped away at night to visit wives, lovers, and children; but women certainly did the same. "I never saw my mother to know her as such more than four or five times in my life," wrote Frederick Douglass, "and each of these times was very short in duration, and at night." Like thousands upon thousands of other enslaved women, Douglass's mother, who had been hired out by her owner, escaped the plantation under cover of darkness to visit her son. Harriet Jacobs, when sent away from her mother and children, would regularly walk six miles at night to visit them. Solomon Bayley's mother fled hundreds of miles from Delaware carrying her infant child when the family was faced with dispersal. On the Mesopotamia plantation in Jamaica, some thirty-five women ran away during the 1820s. Nine of them fled repeatedly to visit friends on the Springfield estate, from which they had been sold. During a six-year period (1809–15), no enslaved person was imprisoned in Savannah, Georgia, more often than a bondwoman named Nancy, who was locked up eleven times. Two others, Nanny and Sally, were also repeat escapees. In both the Caribbean and the US South, escapes by women, especially those with children, seem to have been for shorter periods, often in order to spend time with husbands, reconnect with children from whom they had been

separated, or reunite with parents and lovers. Women were among the most determined "truants" in this regard, strategically using short-term absences to reaffirm communal ties. Sasha Turner's examination of ads for runaways in Jamaican newspapers from the 1780s to the 1820s suggests that more mothers may have escaped with children than has generally been appreciated, as does Betty Wood's investigation of female fugitives in Georgia between 1763 and 1795.[40]

Whether toiling in gang or task systems, enslaved people consistently resisted efforts to speed up and intensify work, to extend working hours, or to tighten discipline. In 1773, George Washington's coachman, Jamey, fled in protest against the tasks assigned by the estate manager. He hid out for three months, stealing food, killing hogs, and encouraging others to join him in hopes of having the manager sacked. One year later, on the Ferronayses' plantation in Cul de Sac, Saint Domingue, all forty slaves in one work gang deserted the fields right in front of their new and brutal overseer, an object lesson in the follies of pushing bonded workers too hard. That same year, George Ogilvie was summoned to his Myrtle Grove estate in South Carolina when ten of his "most useful hands" ran away. Upon his arrival, they returned to lodge a complaint against their overseer. Ogilvie elected not to punish any of the protesters. Around the same time, James Gray, another South Carolina planter, who had worked his bondpeople late into the night, called them out early the next morning only to discover his barn had been "burnt down to the Ground." On a coffee plantation in Berbice, a ten-year struggle revolved around an enslaved driver named January, who had been removed by his owner in 1819. As a community leader, January symbolized opposition to the work and punishment regime of their estate manager. When the latter threatened to jail him for insubordination in 1829, "the whole gang . . . cried out, we must be put in confinement also." And on the eve of the 1831 uprising in Jamaica, an estate lawyer named William Grignon ordered his driver to whip a woman, who turned out to be the driver's wife, for taking a small bit of sugarcane from a field. The driver refused. When Grignon ordered that someone—anyone—should come forward to administer the whipping, none obliged. Hurrying to Montego Bay, the lawyer returned with police officers. By this point, many slaves had armed themselves with machetes while others walked off the plantation and hid in the forest. In the end, the lawyer relented, and no punishment was administered for this flagrant defiance.[41] Notwithstanding the grotesque imbalance of power between masters and slaves, there were lines that masters crossed only at their peril.

VIOLENT PROTEST AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

In Hanover County, Virginia, in 1733, a new steward and his assistant discovered the risks of disciplining "extremely insolent and unruly" slaves. Attempting to clamp down, they sparked a violent skirmish in which forty or fifty bondmen, "armed with clubs and staves," were subdued only after the intervention of a dozen white men with guns. Masters and overseers were not always so lucky. Earlier that same year, a Virginia overseer had been killed by an axe-wielding slave. In December 1768, a bondwoman named Molly poisoned a member of the Council of Barbados. And one evening in 1841, a bullet blew out the brains of Louisiana planter John DeHart as he ate supper, in apparent revenge for selling an enslaved father eight years earlier. Four years before that, a group of enslaved runaways murdered the sheriff of Gonzales County, Texas, before fleeing to Mexico. A Galveston, Texas, enslaved woman named Lucy, after spending a week in the stocks, killed her mistress with a hatchet, while another Texas bondwoman used arsenic to kill her master. And in Louisiana, eight bondmen who had disappeared into the forest following a strike returned to murder their foreman. While these were exceptional acts, murderous responses to brutal overseers were not as rare as is often assumed. "Slaves," writes a historian of southern Mississippi, "found any number of ways to kill drivers, overseers, and owners—with hoes, knives, fence rails—but if there was one weapon of choice, it was surely the axe."[42]

Around Charles Town, Virginia, it was public knowledge that enslaved workers had drowned an overseer on Henry Laurens's plantation. Laurens even recommended that his new overseer tread carefully, lest "the Blacks will drown him too." In James City County, Virginia, an enslaved woman beat an overseer to death with her bare hands in 1793 after he struck her, much like the Florida bondwoman who grabbed a hoe and beat her overseer "to a bloody death" following a whipping. Two enslaved men in Clarksville, Texas, murdered their owner in the spring of 1853, as did three more Texas bondmen five years later. Sometimes, murder was the end-product of extended conflict. In Adams County, Mississippi, over the course of five years (1852–57), bondpeople killed three cruel overseers. In April 1744, colonial officials in Martinique brought charges against sixty-six runaway slaves ("maroons") for killing a bookkeeper with whom they had been locked in conflict over plantation rules and work routines. Every evening, these bondpeople would return to their homes, only to walk away from the fields the next morning. Things

reached a boiling point when the bookkeeper killed a pregnant woman. The enslaved community then murdered the murderer. Notwithstanding their violence, the king pardoned all the killers in light of the bookkeeper's brutality.[43]

Some violent episodes were less dramatic. Many involved rebellions against discipline. A Virginia steward who tried in 1737 to introduce "some small Correction" to bonded workers who worked only "as They Pleas'd," soon found the estate in an uproar. The slaves "abused him very much," their resistance becoming so intractable that the overseer was soon dismissed. In Jamaica in 1765, twenty enslaved workers on the Appleton estate walked off the job and marched for miles to demand the removal of a despised overseer. Although unconvinced by their complaint, the estate manager sacked the overseer in order to restore peace. In 1826, Samuel Cowgill, a new estate superintendent on the Magnolia Plantation in West Feliciana, Louisiana, determined that it was necessary "to inflict punishment" on the workforce. He was dismissed two months later, after having been attacked by an axe-wielding bondman named Pompey. In Berbice, slaves on a coffee plantation won a similar victory in 1829 after a popular driver was put in the stocks. "The whole gang said if this man is locked up we must be locked up too," reported one observer. The man was released, although he was later moved to a different plantation. In the Lower Mississippi Valley, an enslaved man averted a whipping by pulling a knife and then running off. In 1858, Mississippi plantation manager George Croley was struck in the head with an axe after threatening a bonded man named Samuel with the whip. Isaac Mason too forcibly defended himself and fled several times to avoid flogging, before undertaking his final flight from bondage. At Mount Airy estate in Virginia, William Tayloe's head carpenter also absconded after a whipping, making it all the way to Canada. And Lorenzo Ivy's grandmother would run away for weeks at a time, agreeing to return only when her owners vowed, "Dey warn' goin' beat her anymore."[44]

Many escapes involved some form of collective action. This applied to short-term truancies as much as attempts at permanent flight. Living in forests or swamps, hiding out near plantations, evading dogs and slave catchers, going undercover in a town—in all these endeavors, fugitives typically required assistance. Based on years of observation throughout the US South, Frederick Law Olmsted had no doubt that members of slave communities hid and fed fugitives. Talking of escapees, one overseer told Olmsted, "The negroes on the plantation could always bring them in if they chose to. They depended on them for their

food, and they had only to stop the supplies to oblige them to surrender." Solomon Northup described feeding a fugitive named Celeste at his cabin, as well as leaving food for her at a designated site. In addition to providing food, bondpeople passed on information, offered hidden sleeping quarters, and sometimes bargained on behalf of fugitives.[45]

To be sure, many enslaved people suffered greatly for their defiance, enduring savage beatings or lynchings. Yet planters and overseers often negotiated the return of fugitives to the fields and workshops. As we have seen, Lorenzo Ivy's grandmother returned after a "couple of weeks" in the woods only when his master pledged that he "wasn't gonna hide her"—a pledge he honored. Matthew Lewis acknowledged accepting "several runaways" back to his Jamaican estate and instructing that "no questions should be asked." On learning that a bondman called Fortune had fled, Virginia planter Charles Cotesworth Pinckney sent word to "tell the Negroes to let him know that if he will come over here to me immediately I will pardon him." Missouri bondwoman Delicia Patterson returned only after her master promised that she would not be harassed. "So I went back home," she recounted, "and no one ever bothered me any more." When enslaved carpenter Prince Webb vanished from Charleston in a dispute over proximity to his family, his master immediately sent word that there would be "no questions asked" if he voluntarily returned. Similarly, when George Cox of Charleston found that an enslaved family of six had run off, he advertised for their return, pledging that "if they return of their own accord, I will forgive them." George Washington sent the same message to escapee Oney Judge, though the latter rebuffed all invitations to return.[46]

In Mississippi in 1836, planter Joseph Davis reached a "mutual understanding" with a fugitive named Benjamin Montgomery. Not only did Davis agree not to whip or punish the escapee; he also pledged that Montgomery could learn to read and write, earn wages, and manage a store if he promised not to abscond in the future. In Saint Domingue, slaveowners often placed newspaper ads vowing not to punish runaways who returned of their own accord. Across the French Caribbean, fugitives might even bring in priests or neighboring planters to help negotiate the terms of their return. Of course, masters did not always uphold their side of a bargain. Isaac Mason, having fled after assaulting a master intent on beating him, was deceived into returning after a similar offer, only to find himself punished. Yet, truancy strikes got results often enough to make them a viable method of resistance. In some cases, they involved collective planning, as when slave communi-

ties agreed that one member, usually a young man, should run off until an overseer agreed to relieve a pregnant woman of field work. Enslaved mothers in Jamaica also waged truancy strikes of their own, insisting on breastfeeding children for longer periods of time, thus claiming time from commodity production for human reproduction.[47] All these episodes involved elements of collective bargaining: enslaved individuals, typically with community support, withdrew their labor until specific grievances—brutality, poor food, mistreatment of a pregnant field hand, reduced time for breastfeeding, and so on—were addressed.

Sometimes work disruptions of this sort took on a fully communal character. In the summer of 1773, Georgia's governor James Wright, having returned to England, learned of a labor protest on his rice estates. Wright's property manager, after trying to move twenty "good Hands" from one of Wright's plantations to another for a week, had encountered a mass refusal. The strike ended only once he agreed to pay "half a Crown a Piece for the two Sundays" along with "a Dram each" on arrival at the new site. This was money "prudently bestowed," the manager assured Wright, as it would "save a great many barrels of Rice." Payment of wages in return for returning to work reminds us that "plantation success . . . rested foursquare upon the bargaining and contestation of the master-slave relation."[48] Having endured a walkout by forty field workers, the manager of the Ferronnayses' Cul de Sac plantation in Saint Domingue conceded that, as much as he favored punishing escapees, "at other times I don't do anything to them." In Jamaica, Matthew Lewis recounted a morning when all the women "refused to carry away the trash," forcing the shutdown of his sugar mill. When a driver attempted to force the women back to work, "a little fierce devil of a Miss Whuanica flew at his throat, and endeavoured to strangle him." Lewis managed to resolve the dispute but doubted the workers would remain subdued. Time and time again, like proletarians everywhere, bondpeople fought for reduced hours of work, better food and clothing, and a relaxation of workplace discipline. A case in point is the large group of enslaved laborers on the Codrington estate in Barbados who dropped their tools and marched fifteen miles to Bridgetown in June 1738 to lodge complaints with the plantation's attorneys. The bondpeople demanded more leisure time, better food and clothing, the firing of the estate's bookkeeper, and a reduction in the number of overseers.[49] These Barbadian workers did not win their case. But victory did not always go to the owners and managers either.

By 1770 on the Grange Hill estate in Jamaica, for instance, enslaved people had won Thursdays as well as Sundays each week for recreation

and production for themselves on their provision grounds. In February of that year, David Munro, a new overseer with a military background, decided to combat this "relaxation of Discipline." He was greeted with a strike as field workers took off for the woods and elected four delegates, who walked sixty miles to negotiate with the estate attorney. Upon assessing the situation, the attorney sacked Munro, handing victory to the strikers. Similar stories unfolded more than once at Jamaica's Blue Mountain estate, where slaves forced the removal of their overseer in 1795 and again five years later. One historian rightly comments, "By deliberate lassitude, by running away, by sabotage, slaves withheld their labor from the master. In effect they were striking."[50] What's more, they often did so with strategic deliberation designed to maximize economic pressure. The plantation machine was especially vulnerable at harvest times, and chattel laborers knew it. Clergyman-planter Robert Robertson in Antigua claimed that bondpeople often ran away just when "their Labour, or Attendance is most wanted." In the South Carolina rice fields, escapes peaked during the intensive cultivation of the summer months. On John Nevitt's plantation in Adams County, Mississippi, records for 1828 to 1832 show truancy cresting during harvest season when work hours and labor discipline were most intense. And in Louisiana sugar country, workers in the cane fields were more likely to take off in November, during grinding season, than at any other time.[51]

Every victory for labor created new customary standards—working-class *customs in common*—that bonded people tenaciously protected. By the 1830s, slaves in Martinique had achieved the "free Saturday," an extra day away from labor for their masters. What had been won through struggle was vigilantly guarded. "It would be almost impossible for a planter to take even a little bit of time belonging to his slave," wrote a public prosecutor in 1844. "There is a spirit of resistance among the slaves that prevents anyone from threatening what they consider to be their rights." Another Martinican official opined, "To try to abolish it where it was once established would be to provoke disorder and revolt." Bondpeople might also strike to preserve the integrity of their communities. In the 1820s, for instance, all 226 bonded workers on one Jamaican estate withdrew to the bush to demand that they be sold as a group, not separately, in the face of the sale of their plantation.[52] Revolt on this scale broaches *grand marronage*: large-scale collective flight and rebellion. While large-scale marronage could result in the formation of maroon communities, it more often involved protests where bondpeople stayed on their estates and contested planter power.

One sign of the transition from *petit* to *grand marronage* was the generalization of struggle. Just as resistance by wage workers is typically confined to their immediate workplace, so it was with bonded laborers. Most of the time, the individual plantation was the site of class conflict. But sometimes combat could escalate dramatically, both temporally and spatially. A classic indicator of this was the movement of insurgent slaves from one plantation to the next, calling out laborers at other worksites, sometimes torching estates as they marched. In the spring of 1792, a royalist official in Guadeloupe was sent to inventory a property owned by a Republican who had fled the island. He arrived to discover that all the bondpeople—over 150 of them—had disappeared. This was in fact a political strike, as Brindeau would discover a year later, when these bondpeople, alongside hundreds of others, rose up to crush a royalist conspiracy. Certainly mass insurgencies were exceptional, but they were not aberrant. Their roots lay in part in "labour bargaining procedures customarily associated with industrial wage workers."[53]

As with rural workers in industrializing Britain, arson was a key tactic of insurgents. Having been marched to Alabama from Virginia in the 1830s, a group of Henry Tayloe's bondpeople soon ran off while one of them, Mary Flood, set his house ablaze. In December 1844, another fire broke out in Tayloe's plantation house, quite possibly set by Mary Flood's younger sister, Lizzie. Seven years later, one of Tayloe's gin houses went up in flames. In Virginia during the 1850s, Edmund Ruffin watched arson repeatedly take down barns, stables, and corncribs on his estate. Of course, nothing compared to the scale of arson that accompanied the revolution in Haiti (1791–1804), when hundreds of plantations and buildings burned to the ground. A similar pattern can be observed in the Berbice uprising of 1763, when rebels set fire to plantations up and down the Berbice River. Fire also symbolized the Jamaican revolt of 1831–32. On the first night of the uprising, one observer wrote, "The sky became a sheet of flame, as if the whole country had become a vast furnace."[54]

Even when less intense, strikes and slowdowns nurtured cultures of protest. Michel-Rolph Trouillot is undoubtedly right when he claims that prior to the uprising of 1791 the slaves of Haiti did not possess "an explicit intellectual discourse" of revolution. But they did have collective *practices* of resistance that comprised a preparatory school for the great insurrections of the 1790s. Comparing the impact of strikes in prerevolutionary Saint Domingue with that of maroon colonies, Carolyn Fick contends that "short periods of marronage . . . may in the long run have proved more effective an organizational tool for preparing a

revolt than the existence of external autonomous bands." Collective action built collective capacities. And in their use of the strike we see further evidence that "slave workers were an immanent form of proletariat."[55]

SEIZING FREEDOM: MASS STRIKES AND THE PLANTATION PROLETARIAT

Not surprisingly, large-scale revolts by enslaved people tended to be concentrated in periods of dramatic economic change, warfare, and political instability, such as the years 1730–42; the 1760s–70s; the 1790s; and the 1820s–30s. In each of these periods, intensified global competition among imperial powers triggered wars and waves of economic restructuring. Across the century 1730–1830, the major powers became more tightly bound to the economic rhythms and imperatives of a global capitalist economy, as I show in chapter 10. Pressure on planters to meet the competitive demands transmitted by the world market ratcheted up: to expand the scale of production, intensify work processes, and boost the productivity of labor. The most concentrated period in this regard was that of 1790–1832, when use of the strike weapon became an enduring feature of slave rebellion. In the US South, where slavery persisted for over three decades after its elimination in Britain's colonies, a further surge of enslaved revolt erupted during the Civil War as the modern capitalist world system assumed classic form. But this trend was anticipated during earlier insurgent waves.

The first of these periods (1730–42) witnessed more than eighty strikes, uprisings, and conspiracies by indentured and enslaved workers in the Atlantic World. The next insurrectionary wave (1760s–70s) saw the intensification of sugar capitalism throughout the West Indies during the Seven Years War between England and France and the conflicts associated with the American Revolution. Perhaps the greatest of these uprisings was Tacky's Revolt of 1760 in Jamaica, a months-long rebellion of 30,000 slaves. This was followed by the nearly two-year revolt of thousands of bondpeople in the Dutch colony of Berbice in 1763–64, which had been prefigured by plantation strikes a year earlier. The years 1770 to 1774 saw a series of rebellions by bonded people in Tobago. But perhaps the largest uprising of the decade involved mass desertions from the fields by enslaved workers during the Revolutionary War in the United States. We saw in chapter 2 how bondpeople on Landon Carter's Virginia estate took advantage of the chaos to flee their master. They were

joined by thousands of others. In Georgia, for instance, at least a third of the colony's 15,000 bonded workers fled, many taking refuge in forests and swamps. South Carolina planter Robert McCulloh learned in 1781 that all but four of his slaves had "absented themselves" from one of his plantations. So widespread were these South Carolina desertions that one historian describes them as a "'general strike' in the rice fields."[56]

The next great upsurge of slave revolt transpired in the era of the French and Haitian revolutions (1789–1804). This was also the epoch of the *second slavery* that accompanied the rise of Britain's free-trade imperialism. As regions of the world economy became significantly more integrated under British dominance, the force of the system's economic imperative ("the law of value") became more pronounced. Britain's colonial sugar producers, for instance, having lost much of the protective shell that the empire's mercantile policies had provided, were exposed to competition from new regions. The result was an intensification of production (speedup) and an expansion in plantation workforces. In Demerara, the large-scale integrated plantation really took hold in this period, following the colony's transfer from the Dutch to the British in 1803. After a mere decade of British rule, 94 percent of all estates held more than 100 enslaved workers; nearly 50 percent employed over 200.[57] As plantations became larger and exploitation harsher, enslaved people grew more restive. And they did so at a time when a "common wind" of plebeian insurgence was spreading revolutionary ferment across the Atlantic World.[58]

As for Saint-Domingue, from the mid-1780s onward an intense strike movement swept the Northern Plain in response to work intensification. On May 16, 1785, an estate attorney reported that "all the slaves on the Lombard plantation have marooned." Less than three weeks later, the manager of the Ducrot estate announced that "the slaves have just pulled off a coup," by which he meant a mass walkout. In October of the same year, forty slaves on the Chastenoy plantation struck for at least two months. Despite ebbs and flows, this wave of struggle was unrelenting. By June 1789, the same estate attorney was writing that the entire workforce on the Montaignay plantation had been off the job for four months.[59] When Toussaint Louverture called on tens of thousands of bondpeople to launch a mass strike against the French in October of 1798, he was not inventing a novel tactic; he was drawing on a well-developed repertoire of resistance.[60]

The uprising in Saint-Domingue in August 1791 was no isolated event, notwithstanding the uniqueness of its outcome. In Dominica,

groups of bondpeople had refused to work in January 1791 to back up their demand for one, sometimes two, additional days off from field work. Grenada and St. Vincent exploded in 1795, as did Pointe Coupée Parish in Louisiana. In Curaçoa, a remarkable insurrection began at the same time with a strike by 1,000 enslaved plantation workers. The strike soon mushroomed into a multiracial rebellion of armed Black slaves, mulattoes, free Blacks, and *zambos* (people of mixed Indigenous and African descent).[61]

This wave subsided after the free Black state of Haiti was founded in 1801, but Britain's move to abolish its trade in Africa slaves in 1807 rekindled the hunger for emancipation. Unrest surged in the United States too as that state went to war with Britain in 1812. On the eve of the conflict, a major slave uprising broke out on a Louisiana sugar estate whose owners had fled the revolution in Saint-Domingue. Marching from one plantation to the next, the rebel band grew to about 500 armed insurgents who faced off with US troops and militias. During the American conflict with Britain the next year, thousands of bondpeople fled estates on the sea island coast of Georgia. The war years of 1812–15 also formed the context for the great struggle waged by self-emancipated Blacks and Indigenous peoples in Florida in 1816, the Battle of Negro Fort.[62]

But it was later that year in Barbados that the mass strike by enslaved people in British colonies matured as a weapon of struggle. Henceforth, it would remain a vital component of slave resistance. In the run-up to Bussa's Revolt of 1816 in that colony, a remarkable leader of enslaved people named Nanny Grigg had urged "strike action" by bonded people. For Grigg, freedom was to come by downing tools and halting plantation production. Sources quoted her as having told people that "they were all damned fools to work, for that she would not, as freedom they were sure to get." Evidence suggests that many of the leaders of the rebellion believed, at least initially, that the strike would chart a nonviolent path to liberty. It is fascinating to realize that the first radical text promoting the general strike as a weapon for the emancipation of all labor, bonded and "free," appeared the year after Bussa's Revolt—and was written by Robert Wedderburn, the Spencean communist radical in Britain who had been born to an enslaved mother in Jamaica. Linebaugh and Rediker have rightly hailed Wedderburn as "a theorist of the Atlantic proletariat." Building on that insight will require a history of global labor that does justice to the emergence of the mass strike from struggles of the chattel proletariat.[63]

Seven years later, the mighty uprising of more than 10,000 bondpeople in Demerara grew out of deliberate slowdowns in the fields, persistent lateness to work, and increased absenteeism. In at least some locales, rebels told field workers that their fellows on other estates were going "to lay down their tools" for freedom. In addition to strike action, some insurgents promoted the idea of seizing the estates—the means of production—rather than burning them down. The governor of Berbice, for instance, said of the 1816 rebel leaders that they "intended to murder the Whites & take possession of the Estates for their own benefit which they therefore were not to burn as formerly." We witness similar episodes during the general strike of the slaves during the Civil War in the United States. In May of 1862, enslaved people seized two Mississippi plantations owned by Confederate president Jefferson Davis and his brother, working the land for themselves for months before Union troops arrived. After Charles Pettigrew fled his North Carolina estate in the face of approaching Union troops, Black people simply divided up the land and livestock and began farming for themselves. In October of the same year, slaves on the Weston plantation in South Carolina drove off their overseer, pulled down fences on the estate, and commenced working the land together. In another case, bondpeople armed with sticks drove off their overseer, pledging to "make Laws for themselves."[64]

Nowhere was the mass strike more central to rebel strategy in the Caribbean than in the Jamaican uprising of 1831–32. There, an enslaved Baptist preacher, Samuel Sharpe, promoted it as a nonviolent alternative to armed revolt. Rebels interviewed after the event repeatedly confirmed this. "He said we must all agree to set down after Xmas," Joseph Martin recalled of Sharpe. Describing a clandestine meeting before the revolt, Edward Hylton explained that "the whole party bound themselves by oath not to work after Christmas as slaves." According to Edward Barrett, "Sharpe said we must sit down." At one estate, striking bondpeople declared, "We have worked hard enough already, and will work no more . . . We won't be slaves no more; we won't lift hoe no more; we won't take flog no more." One official in Trelawny Parish stated that, on December 28, "nine-tenths of the whole slave population have this morning refused to turn out to work." Appearing before a committee of inquiry, Sir Willoughby Cotton told the commissioners, "The only plan I can perceive was a simultaneous rising to resist working if they were not declared free at Christmas."[65] At the peak of the upheaval roughly 30,000 bondpeople had downed tools and left the fields. In the face of brutal military repression the Jamaican rebels of

1831–32 did in fact turn to arson and armed resistance. And while colonial troops prevailed in the short run, the uprising hastened the end of slavery in the British Empire.[66]

"A GENERAL SPIRIT OF INSUBORDINATION": ENSLAVED WOMEN AND THE GENERAL STRIKE OF 1861–65

In recent decades, historians have genuinely engaged the profound insights of W. E. B. Du Bois's magisterial *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935). At the end of the day, Du Bois tells us, it was the slaves who crushed slavery. In their mass flight toward Union forces; in the withdrawal of labor by half a million of them from the Southern economy; in their enlistment in the Union army and navy; in their strikes, slowdowns, insubordinations, land seizures, and guerilla warfare—in all these ways and more, bondpeople severely impaired the Confederacy, boosted the Union cause, and liberated themselves. Mere rumor of Northern troops in their vicinity was often enough to trigger a stampede from chattel slavery. As it became clear that Union troops would not—or could not—return the thousands of bondpeople flocking to their camps, "the slave entered upon a general strike against slavery." Not only did half a million exit the plantation economy; they also transferred much of that labor-power to the Union cause. As soldiers, sailors, scouts, cooks, guides, construction workers, and more, fugitive Blacks boosted the federal side, transforming the conflict into a war against slavery. Their insurgent presence repeatedly forced the hand of Lincoln's government to accept fugitives as "contraband" property; to enlist Black men into the armed forces; to set up relief camps for self-liberated people; to pay wages for the work of Black people on the battlefront and in the fields; to issue the Emancipation Proclamation; to (eventually) pay equal wages to Black soldiers; to extend voting rights; and more. All these conquests were rooted in a basic desire to improve the conditions of life—to eliminate the whip, end forced labor, reunite households. Cumulatively, they implied radical change. Freedom's cause meant crushing the planter Confederacy. "This was not merely the desire to stop work," wrote Du Bois. "It was a general strike . . . to stop the economy of the plantation system, and to do that they left the plantations."[67] In short, it was a movement for self-emancipation.[68]

Generations of historians largely ignored Du Bois's incisive analysis. Racism, to be sure. And with it, ideological occlusion. No matter how

compelling the evidence of a mass movement for self-emancipation, the liberal tradition ultimately assigns meaningful agency to elite actors. In the liberal worldview, Lincoln *must* have freed the slaves since no one else could have done so. The view from above renders mass movements of self-liberation unintelligible. But the elite fears and anxieties that pervade the letters and diaries of Southern planters validate Du Bois's judgment. Whenever assessing the behavior of bonded people, notes Steven Hahn, slaveholder correspondence "spoke of 'disturbances,' 'contagions,' 'symptoms of revolt,' 'terrible stirs,' stampedes,' 'mutinies,' 'intentions to spring,' 'strikes,' 'turn outs,' and 'states of insurrection.'" In August 1862, Laura Comer, a slaveholder from Georgia, wrote in her diary that "the servants are so indolent and obstinate it is a *trial* to have anything to do with them."[69] The sentiment was expressed thousands of times over as bondpeople fled, aided Union soldiers, refused orders, torched barns and big houses, and struck out for freedom.

If anything, Du Bois underestimated the scale and the multidimensionality of the general strike of the slaves. He concentrated overwhelmingly on the withdrawal of labor by half a million fugitives and the military contributions of nearly 200,000 Black men in arms. These were both inspiring and politically decisive, and Du Bois rightly highlighted their importance as had no previous historian.[70] But the picture he painted is overly focused on young Black men in the army and navy. In actuality, women, children, and all those who stayed on or near the plantations played much larger roles than Du Bois discerned. In addition to their flight to freedom, they struck in the fields; they insisted on money payment for their work; they demanded reduced hours and production quotas; they supplied Union forces with intelligence, food, and weapons. Enslaved women engaged in a reproductive strike by carrying children—and their own capacity to produce more offspring—to Union lines. In exceptional cases, they joined slave militias to harass planters and Confederate troops. All of these actions ought to be considered components of the general strike. In Rosa Luxemburg's classic treatment, the mass strike is an ever-changing and multidimensional social process:

> The mass strike . . . reflects all the phases of the political and economic struggle, all stages and factors of the revolution. Its adaptability, its efficiency, the factors of its origin are constantly changing . . . it is a ceaselessly moving, changing sea of phenomena . . .
>
> It is absurd to think of the mass strike as one act, one isolated action. The mass strike is rather the indication, the rallying idea, of a whole period of the class struggle lasting for years, perhaps for decades.[71]

To be sure, the general strike of 1861–65 had marked differences from the Russian mass strikes of 1905 analyzed by Luxemburg. Crucially, the former involved chattel laborers who performed largely agricultural work. Their uprising was thus oriented to the destruction of the slave relation, while the Russian workers of 1905 fought Tsarist absolutism as well as agrarian and industrial capitalism. Nevertheless, there are clear similarities with respect to the *dynamics* of subaltern insurgency. To get a sense of this, we need to attend to the activity of slaves on, as well as off, the plantations.

From the inception of the Civil War, Confederate reports sounded the alarm about unruly bondpeople. In April 1861, a correspondent from Prince George County, South Carolina, warned of looming "horrors of insurrection" as white men left the plantations for the battle lines. From Louisiana the following month, another described "very alarming disturbances among the slaves." "The Negroes are unwilling to do any work, no matter what it is," bemoaned a South Carolina planter in September 1862. An overseer from North Carolina grumbled about the erosion of his authority over enslaved workers, reporting that "something like 100" had fled in a single month. Two months later, a journalist in the same state observed that "the negroes are beginning to manifest . . . a general spirit of insubordination." On the Pugh plantation in Louisiana, bonded people refused work and assaulted their master and overseer, "injuring them severely." In July of 1862, insurgent slaves on a Mississippi estate cut the throat of an overseer who resisted their demands. As Union troops expanded their presence throughout the Mississippi Valley, growing numbers of chattel workers downed tools and seized estates, including two owned by Jefferson Davis and his brother. On John C. Jenkins's plantation, laborers refused to work at the beginning of 1864, vowing to divide the land among themselves.[72]

At the same time that hundreds of thousands of bondpeople were leaving the South, huge numbers stayed put while engaging in strikes, occupying land, forcing out brutal overseers, demanding wages for work, and aiding and abetting Union forces. Across the South, bondpeople "pressed for nothing more relentlessly than control over their own labor," says one historian. And whenever Union troops came within striking distance, large numbers of enslaved people boldly insisted they were now free. Weeks before the official declaration of the Emancipation Proclamation (January 1, 1863), a reporter in southern Louisiana declared that slavery was "forever destroyed and worthless whatever Mr. Lincoln or anyone else may say on the subject." On one

plantation in the state, slaves packed their bags and left when their owner refused to dismiss an overseer. Before they had gone far, he chased them down, promising that they could have "any overseer they wanted." Even in Texas, at considerable remove from the presence of Northern troops, one slave mistress was so intimidated by the unruliness of her bondpeople that she confided, "I shall say nothing and if they stop working entirely I will try to feel thankful if they let me alone." These struggles on the plantations interacted dramatically with those on the battle front. Having fled to Union lines, many slaves regularly returned, often armed, to liberate friends and family members.[73]

It is vital to remember that a majority of toilers in the fields were women, large numbers of whom fled to Union camps. One census showed that nearly half of all fugitives in three Union-occupied counties were women. And those who stayed put also fought back. On the Magnolia Plantation in Louisiana in 1864, the women all refused to work. In the big house female domestics pushed back too. In June 1861, a Louisiana mistress noted in her journal, "The house servants have been giving a lot of trouble lately—lazy and disobedient . . . The excitement in the air has infected them." Referring to one of her family's domestic bondwomen, Eliza Andrews wrote, "Father says we must not trust mammy too far," especially since every slave is a "possible spy." A cook warned her mistress that she hoped "to burn her up." Yet, rather than their owners, it was mainly buildings that unruly women put to flames. In Pineville, South Carolina, a woman and her son routinely went about torching planter homes during the final months of the Civil War. At Richfield plantation in that state, newly freed women and men burned the big house to the ground in January 1866.[74] As Union forces advanced across the South and the Confederacy wobbled, bondwomen became increasingly assertive and rebellious. In the waning months of the Civil War and the first few of the postemancipation period, "cooks, seamstresses, waiters, bed warmers, washers, ironers, fanners, chambermaids, and scullions in every corner of the South left or made preparation to leave."[75]

In some cases, strikes by enslaved women and men culminated in armed resistance to the local plantocracy. One captivating example was the 1865 uprising in Pineville, South Carolina, known as "Rose's War," which began with a wave of plantation strikes that mushroomed into armed struggle. As Union troops advanced throughout the state, enslaved people downed tools and provided food and local intelligence to Northern soldiers. Facing revolt in the fields, the Confederacy was now forced to fight on two fronts: against Union soldiers *and* against rebellious

slaves. "We have two kinds of enemies to contend with," wrote one local planter, "our negro outlaws & the Yankees." To crush the labor unrest in Pineville, the planter class summoned Confederate scouts, who killed scores of bonded people. But the slaves fought back, wounding several of their assailants. As their movement grew, embracing plantation workers in at least two parishes, some slaves also seized arms and occupied estates, using them as bases from which to attack Confederate forces. The strike movement had now become an abolitionist guerilla war. Among the leaders of the revolt was an enslaved woman named Rose, described as "no doubt the head of it all." And while many of its leaders were executed, including Rose, this insurgency hastened the Union victory in the area and led to the direct liberation of over 1,000 bondpeople.[76]

Rose's War illustrates the shortcomings of defining the general strike of the slaves exclusively in terms of those who left the South. The growing resistance of those who stayed on the plantations also decisively weakened the slavocracy. In addition, the reproductive strike struck a huge blow. Of course, enslaved women had long used contraception, sexual abstinence, abortion, and infanticide to limit breeding of chattel children.[77] But the general strike of the slaves involved concerted efforts to *deliver* children from bondage. And enslaved women were the primary deliverers.[78]

From the outset of the war, bondwomen accompanied husbands, sons, lovers, and friends to Union camps and military posts; many others struck out on their own. Everywhere, they carried children with them. One day in 1863, Mississippi bondwoman Judai White stole away with her two daughters. Emmeline Trott absconded with her son from an Alabama estate as Union forces approached. The following year, Lizzie and her husband Stephen fled with their children from the Allston plantation and saltworks at Britton's Neck, South Carolina. Lizzie's mother, Mary Grice, was strongly suspected of having engineered this escape. In West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, as Union troops moved in, there were incidents of women rising from childbed in search of freedom. Cases such as these were part of a Civil War shift in the pattern of runaways to freedom. Whereas young men had overwhelmingly predominated before the conflict, slave women and children now figured more prominently, removing both their reproductive labor and its products (children) from the plantation economy.[79] Children too seem to have become more restive and assertive as the slavocracy wobbled. One freeperson recounted how two young, enslaved girls in South Carolina, although separated from their mother and father, joined the

Civil War flight, managing to reunite with their parents at Port Royal. Bonded children were also swept up in the mounting wave of defiance. A South Carolina mistress reported on "a little negro girl" so impertinent that she "told me how my negroes hated white folks & how they talked about *me*." Not only were children liberated in large numbers from the South; they absorbed the rebellious attitudes of their communities. Rather than the social reproduction of docile laborers—always a myth—the movement of the general strike fostered the reproduction of young partisans of freedom. In the midst of the Civil War, the Black woman was indeed "the custodian of a house of resistance," in Angela Davis's apt expression.[80] And that house of resistance nurtured a proletarian moral economy.

CHAPTER 8

Life-Making and Enslaved Reproduction

Writing in 1774, Jamaican planter Edward Long noted a delicate trade-off between maximizing slave output and renewing the plantation workforce. If enslaved workers are pushed to produce one hogshead of sugar or more each, he claimed, "few children will be brought up on such an estate, whatever number may be born." Excess labor, in other words, so stressed the body as to deplete reproductive capacity. In the spirit of political arithmetic, Long even constructed a table showing this inverse relationship between high labor output and biological reproduction. "Those negroes breed the best," he concluded, "whose labour is least, or easiest." A contradiction between production and reproduction thus haunted the plantation system.

A defining feature of capitalism's bio-regime is the direct and detailed domination of laboring bodies in the work process. At the same time, capital cannot sustain accumulation in the long run without new supplies of labor-power to replace those that become worn out or expire. A gendered biopower regime is necessary, therefore, to regulate the sexuality and procreative capacities of birthing bodies.[1] Laws of population must therefore accompany those of accumulation. For planters, the mechanisms for populating the system were variable: they might purchase new supplies of chattel labor-power, or they could incentivize its breeding. One way or another, new stocks of labor-power had to be obtained.[2]

The body of the female chattel proletarian was thus the site of a two-fold domination. On the one hand, she was a commodity-producing

worker for slave-owning capital. In this domain she was "not at all gender-related, gender-specific,"[3] but merely a laborer par excellence:

> Bonded women cut down trees to clear lands for cultivation. They hauled logs by leather straps attached to their shoulders. They plowed using mule and ox teams and hoed, sometimes with the heaviest implements available. They dug ditches, spread manure fertilizer, and piled coarse fodder with their bare hands. They built and cleaned Southern roads, helped construct Southern railroads, and, of course, they picked cotton.[4]

On the other hand, enslaved women were the producers and reproducers of the next generation of bonded laborers—and here gender specificities came into play. Indeed, chattel law adhered to the womb. Throughout the New World, the status of a child derived from the legal status of the mother; if she was chattel property, so were her offspring. The enslaved woman was thus a producer of both commodities and future bonded workers. She was both a "work unit" and a "breeding unit."

This dual domination of chattel women—as both producers and reproducers for planter capital—traverses the very meaning of the term *proletarian*, which derives from the Latin word *proles*, meaning "offspring." In ancient Rome, the proletarian was a propertyless individual, someone whose only wealth resided in their children. Yet, in its modern meaning, the term has come to denote those who toil for capitalist employers. Where the proletarian woman is concerned, the two meanings—ancient and modern—converge. The woman of the proletariat produces commodities (and services) for capitalists, *and* she reproduces the potential labor-power, or "offspring," through which future commodities will be produced. In the US South, where rates of reproduction were comparatively high, slaveowners frequently recorded their increased wealth in terms of revenues from commodity production *and* the procreative increase in their workforce. "Women," wrote Harriet Jacobs, "are considered of no value, unless they continually increase their owner's stock." While this may underplay their value as direct producers of commodities, some enslaved women *were* valued primarily in reproductive terms. On Henry Laurens's South Carolina estate, bondwoman Nanny was openly described as "a breeding wench."[5]

The specifically gendered domination of bondwomen was also manifest in their vulnerability to sexual violence. Rape and sexual abuse were ever-present threats for female slaves, particularly during their youth. Harriet Jacobs bluntly recounted her own vulnerability in this regard, and Solomon Northup recorded that of young Patsey on a Louisiana

cotton plantation. Stories of sexual violence were a commonplace in interviews provided by runaways to vigilance committees. As chattel property, enslaved women were deprived of the legal right to resist sexual violence, as manifested in the case of *State of Missouri v. Celia, A Slave* (1855), in which Celia killed her owner after enduring four years of rape only to be convicted of murder and hanged. Regulated by the laws of property and procreation, the female Black body was always already violated. Documents like Thomas Thistlewood's Jamaican diaries, which recall his persistent sexual exploitation of enslaved women, merely disclose the normalization of carnal abuse in the sexual economy of plantation capitalism. In this landscape of gender violence, as many as one in every five children born to bondwomen in the US South may have had white fathers.[6]

Valuable as enslaved offspring were, all time devoted to delivering and nurturing *future* producers of surplus value detracted from the production of surplus value in the here-and-now. This tradeoff was compounded by the reality that women of childbearing age were among the most productive field workers.[7] Jamaican planter William Beckford acknowledged his reluctance to encourage female laborers to breed "as thereby so much work is lost by their attendance upon their infants." Yet the consequence of assigning women to arduous and excessive field work was "a negative effect on reproduction," as one French analyst put it some years later.[8] True, this dilemma was not unique to planter capitalism. As Marx showed, early industrial capitalism in England literally worked people to premature death. Yet, falling back on naturalistic assumptions about female procreation, Marx assumed that new births would more or less automatically replace untimely deaths. In this he was wrong. Alongside an uncritical naturalism in this regard, he underestimated capital's tendency to exterminate the working class by way of premature death, a trend that predominated to a horrifying degree throughout the Caribbean plantation system.[9]

In Jamaica, 31 percent of the 604 enslaved women on William Beckford's Clarendon estates in 1780 were "in various stages of physical malaise" according to analysis by Lucille Mathurin Mair. Of 284 women field workers, generally the youngest and fittest adult women, 22 percent (or 65) were "distempered," "infirm," or "weakly." A survival analysis of the Mesopotamia plantation in Jamaica for the years 1762–1832 indicates that increased exposure to field labor reduced the lifespan of an enslaved woman by as much as 30 percent.[10] The majority of these women were almost certainly suffering the effects of overwork

and malnutrition. Little surprise, therefore, that they also experienced low rates of fertility and high rates of miscarriage, or that their offspring died in shocking numbers. To be sure, bondwomen sometimes contributed to lower rates of procreation by prolonging breastfeeding of children, postponing intercourse during nursing, and exercising a variety of forms of birth control. But more than anything else it was the exhaustion and undernourishment of women field workers that accounted for the abysmal failure of the bonded population to reproduce itself throughout so much of the New World.[11]

Staying with Jamaica, whose population dynamics were shared with most of the West Indies, some 575,000 captive Africans were imported into the colony during the 1700s, yet the enslaved population grew by only 250,000 over the century. The West Indian sugar islands as a whole received 2.3 million bonded Africans by 1807 yet held a total slave population of merely 775,000, indicating a startlingly high mortality rate. If we abstract from slave imports, the excess of deaths over births represented an annual decline of 2 percent in Jamaica's enslaved population during the 1770s and 1780s. This catastrophic failure to reproduce could only be offset by large-scale purchases of bondpeople. By contrast, there were 1.4 million bonded Black people living in North America as of 1807, while only 388,000 enslaved people had been sold into slavery there. In other words, the enslaved population in the United States had quadrupled via the birth rate, while in the sugar islands of the Caribbean it could not come close to even reproducing itself. One study notes that the enslaved birth rate in the United States was more than twice as high as in the British Caribbean, a finding in tune with Richard S. Dunn's demonstration that the 191 bondwomen of childbearing age on the Mount Airy plantation in Virginia bore more children between 1762 and 1833 than did the 299 slave women at the Mesopotamia estate in Jamaica over the same period. At Mesopotamia roughly half of recorded pregnancies ended in miscarriages, stillbirths, or infant deaths shortly after birth. So divergent are these reproduction patterns that Dunn suggests New World colonies had "a dual slave system."[12] More accurately, New World slavery experienced two divergent systems of reproduction—one reliant on new purchases on the market; the other on encouraging bio-social reproduction by enslaved women.

Before further comparing these systems, let us debunk the idea that the main differentiating factor was climate. The tropical environment of the West Indies can certainly be more punishing and disease-inducing than that on much of the US mainland, but this alone cannot account

for the divergences in patterns of reproduction. Consider that, while enslaved women on plantations in Saint Domingue had low rates of reproduction similar to bonded female sugar workers in Jamaica, the reproduction rate was twice as high for self-emancipated women in the Maniel Maroon colony in Saint-Domingue, who lived and worked in the same climate. And in the free Maroon communities of Jamaica, population doubled by natural increase between 1770 and 1830—a trend entirely at odds with that among slaves in the colony. Some commentators blame the ardors of sugar production for the failure of enslaved populations to reproduce themselves by natural means. But even here there was an important exception: the Caribbean island of Barbados. Notwithstanding its tropical location and its overwhelming reliance on sugar, Barbados had a positive rate of slave reproduction (in which the number of births exceeded the number of deaths). As in the US South, some Barbadian planters treated enslaved women of childbearing age as "increasers" and were in the habit of paying mothers for births. A different economy of slave reproduction, with less grueling treatment of pregnant women and new mothers, resulted in substantially higher rates of birth and infant survival even where sugar was the main crop.[13] Working bondpeople to death and depleting their fertility was not a matter of climate but of morbid business decisions with predictable demographic results.

So long as fresh supplies of chattel slaves were abundant and their prices sufficiently low, a majority of Caribbean planters could—and did—rely on the market in human flesh to replenish bonded labor-power. At the right price point, life would be sacrificed to the production of surplus value. But as slave supply faltered, as prices rose, and as abolitionists pushed a natalist critique of plantation slavery, West Indian planters moved incrementally to improve conditions for pregnant bondwomen. From the 1780s, with the British government pressing reforms, planters half-heartedly began to improve conditions for pregnant bondwomen. By the 1820s they were moving fitfully toward the self-reproducing model operative in both Barbados and the US South.[14]

A determinedly natalist policy emerged in mainland colonies like South Carolina and Georgia around the 1730s. This went hand in hand with encouragement of Black family formation. Reliance on domestic growth of the chattel proletariat was powerfully reinforced by the closing of the slave trade to the United States in 1807. Increasingly, planters offered money, gifts, and extended time away from the fields to new mothers. Many bondwomen were excused from field labor for four

weeks after delivery, sometimes more, and many returned to lighter duties at first, in close proximity to their babies so they might continue breastfeeding. The "Rules of the Plantation" published by *The Southern Cultivator* in 1859 advised that new mothers should leave the fields to nurse their children every morning, afternoon, and evening until the newborns reached eight months; after that they were to be permitted to visit them twice daily until they reached a year. Doubtless, the productivity of new mothers in the fields suffered due to such breaks. On one Alabama cotton plantation, mothers with young infants picked about 40 percent less cotton each day. Yet, these reductions in productive labor were understood to be *reproductively* valuable. Indeed, lifetime procreative fecundity was commonly rewarded. Plowden C. J. Weston's *Plantation Manual* (1800) recommended giving Saturdays off to bondwomen who had birthed six or more living children. Planters also paid enslaved midwives for assisting at successful births. On Rachel O'Connor's Louisiana estate, every woman who bore a child received a new calico dress. Planters also paid enslaved midwives for assisting at births, as we have seen. The demographic results were striking. In less than thirty-five years (1776 to 1810), the slave population of Virginia doubled through natural increase; South Carolina followed suit. By 1800, fully 80 percent of the bonded population of the South had been born in the New World. In the subsequent half-century (1810–60), as the cotton boom led to a huge expansion of the plantation system, the continued growth of the bonded population enabled Virginia planters alone to export 440,000 bondpeople to new regions of the Cotton South. By that point, J. D. DeBow, publisher of one of the most important planter journals in the country, was advising that bonded women should be treated as the nucleus of any plantation. Journals and account books show that planters were paying attention; increasingly, they kept close records of all slave births and attached monetary values to them.[15]

None of this is to deny that Southern planters squeezed costs for maintaining bondpeople and their children, and that mortality rates for slave children were shockingly high. Nevertheless, operating in a distinct economy of reproduction, these planter capitalists counted deaths as a financial "loss." This is why many large masters invested in keeping enslaved children alive. During the hot months when malaria rates rose in the swampy rice fields of Georgia and South Carolina, wealthy planters frequently sent children to "pineland camps" accompanied by older bondwomen who served as cooks and childminders. Taking an older woman from the field to work as a cook was justified, said one writer in

the *Southern Agriculturalist*, if it preserved just "one little Negro extra" for the estate. For Southern planters these expenditures were sound business investments. And they were duly rewarded. By the 1820s, the enslaved population of the South was remarkably young; 40 percent of it was under fifteen years old. If Southern planters did display a "paternalist" ethos—and this has been massively overstated—it owed something to the huge presence of bonded children. But this was a capitalist paternalism, one inscribed by the logic of profitability.[16]

By the early nineteenth century, planters in the British West Indies were inching toward this self-reproducing slave system. Hoping to deflect abolitionists, who highlighted the ill treatment of enslaved women and their children, the British government pushed for doctors, nurses, and hospitals on estates; encouraged breastfeeding by slave mothers; legislated payment for midwives if newborns survived their first month; and offered £1 to overseers for every child born on their watch that reached its first birthday. By 1816, Jamaican law required that £3 should be provided to every planter who reported a childbirth on the estate, a reward to be equally divided between the mother, the midwife, and the attending nurse. In synchrony, new limits were placed on corporal punishment by slaveholders and overseers, particularly for pregnant women.[17] British West Indian planters responded, albeit haltingly, to these initiatives. On the Mesopotamia plantation in Jamaica, mothers of healthy newborns were rewarded with a £1 bonus. Matthew ("Monk") Lewis offered one dollar each to new mothers on his Jamaican estate, while enslaved women on the island's Golden Grove plantation frequently received a quarter of a dollar for each successful birth in the 1790s. Even Thomas Thistlewood paid bondwoman Abba at least six times for assisting deliveries.[18] Yet, many West Indian slaveowners continued to resist the sacrifice of women's time in the fields, particularly by refusing extended breastfeeding by slave mothers. Bonded women, however, regularly took matters into their own hands.

ENSLAVED WOMEN'S STRUGGLES FOR REPRODUCTIVE CONTROL

The arrival of chattel newborns activated in extremis the tension between life-making and the plantation system's political economy of death. Every time they asserted their rights to raise children themselves, to nurture kin, to sustain households, and to create networks of care, enslaved people affirmed life against the dictates of capital. As Herbert

Gutman astutely observed, "The owner viewed the birth of a slave child primarily as an economic fact, but the slave viewed the same event primarily as a social and familial fact."[19] Herein lay an indelible conflict.

One extended episode highlights bondpeople's commitment to control of social reproduction. For twenty-five years (1808 to 1832), Jamaican planter John Baillie offered two dollars to any mother who would wean her children in twelve months. For twenty-five years he got no takers. Slave women would not put a price on life-making and mother-child bonding. Despite pressure from planters and doctors to wean babies earlier, many bondwomen nursed their offspring for periods exceeding two years. Bonded women may also have been exercising birth control by abstaining from sexual intercourse during prolonged lactation periods—another way of controlling their own reproduction. In addition, enslaved women defended home births assisted by Black midwives, contesting moves by white doctors to regulate birthing. Two Virginia physicians estimated that midwives, a majority of them Black, aided up to 90 percent of all slave births in that state. Bondwomen similarly flouted attempts to move their babies to nurseries, preserving for themselves the feeding and sheltering of their offspring.[20]

In all these ways, enslaved women defied reduction of their wombs to mere containers of future labor-power. Against the economic logic of planter capitalism, they affirmed their own integral personhood and that of their children. They did so by weaving bio-social reproduction into communal practices of solidarity and care. Not only did Black midwives assist at births; friends and family members frequented the birthing room. Refusing the controlling efforts of white doctors, bondwomen preserved the place of birth within the daily life of the slave community. "The presence of friends and family members in the birthing room contradicts the idea that captive Africans were a commodity, disconnected, and socially dead," writes Sasha Turner. Enslaved men, especially husbands, also played critical roles in sustaining the mutual networks that organized the birthing and raising of children. They advocated for wives and mothers before overseers, owners, and estate lawyers; they went beyond advocacy by breaking tools or running away to protest harsh treatment of those who were pregnant. Women too acted on these fronts, most ominously by way of poisoning or arson in defense of expectant mothers on the estate.[21]

Control of childrearing also enabled enslaved parents to reduce their own workloads. If they brought babies and young children to the fields, parents could reasonably take breaks to tend their offspring. Should

children be kept at a plantation nursery or left in the care of an elder, nursing mothers might leave the fields two or three times a day to breastfeed them. Mothers might also end work early to prepare their household's evening meal. All such moments spared from commodity production reduced the labor output of enslaved mothers. Bonded parents also frequently pressed planters to acknowledge fathers and their responsibilities to households. Although fathers were rarely listed in plantation record books, they might be recognized in practice. On his Alabama estate, Willis P. Bocock, for instance, gave a hen to fathers for every child they brought to work for the first time in the fields. Further incentives to get children into field work included a doubling of their food rations, as well as extra clothes and blankets.[22]

Many planters saw advantages in stable slave households that provided new supplies of labor-power. But as sites of social reproduction, such households also contested and constrained planter authority. Curbs on slaveowners' authority began with the fight for voluntary unions (marriages). Insisting they would select their own partners, enslaved women in Jamaica usually obtained a meaningful degree of personal choice in their romantic, sexual, and familial lives. A similar element of individual choice characterized pair-bonding throughout the US South, including the liberty to consensually dissolve slave marriages.[23]

BUILDING THE SLAVE FAMILY

The predominant family form among New World enslaved people was a nucleated one, comprised of a married couple with children. As early as 1730 on Maryland's lower Western Shore, households based on a married couple with children appear to have been the norm, as was true across Virginia by mid-century. Because of the slave population's high rate of natural reproduction in the US South, the nucleated household was especially widespread there; but it was the norm throughout the Caribbean as well.[24]

Nonetheless, enslaved families displayed considerable diversity. In part, this had to do with forced separations of parents, children, spouses, and siblings due to slave sales. Records often show individuals living on their own and in households containing members of more than one kin group. Moreover, it was not uncommon for bondpeople to move through a variety of different family formations throughout their lives.[25] While the vast majority of bonded people on the Gay family's plantation in Louisiana lived in households with married couples, for instance,

there were two households headed by single men with children, and five containing single mothers and children. Another sixteen men lived in male-only units. Although the most common form of nonnuclear household in Louisiana involved siblings living together, multikin group structures were also present. In fact, on the Old Montpelier estate in Jamaica eight bondpeople coming from three different households shared a compound of several houses and kitchen gardens that they worked in common. Amid this diversity, most enslaved children in the antebellum South grew up in the presence of two parents. In Louisiana, a sample of over 10,000 enslaved people (1810–64) found that roughly half of all households consisted of married couples with children. Another 25 percent involved people living with some blood relatives, making for roughly three-quarters that inhabited households with kin. These proportions held on both sugar and cotton plantations in the state. Records for the Gay plantation in 1856 show 133 of 167 bondpeople living in units centered on married couples, the vast majority with children. Allan Kulikoff found similar patterns among bondpeople in the Chesapeake, just as Orville Vernon Burton did for enslaved people in Edgefield County, South Carolina. Analogous patterns of marriage, kinship, and nucleated families held even in the Lower South after the family separations of the great southern migration between 1810 and 1860. Of 181 formerly enslaved people in Texas, 60 percent reported growing up in families with two parents.[26]

It has been rightly noted of the US South that "slaves placed marriage at the pinnacle of intimate relations." The same was true in the British West Indies, where bondwomen fought strenuously for marriage rights. Slave weddings were noteworthy moments of community recognition and festivity, often featuring a ritual where newlyweds "jumped the broomstick" in front of celebrants. In Jamaica, women might symbolize their marriages by wearing the cotta, a circular pad of cloth or bark, which would be publicly cut in two in the event of divorce. Neighbors further honored marital unions by building housing and furniture or by making quilts for the newlyweds. For many young couples, marriage and family formation served partially as compensation for the early loss of familial ties due to sales (possibly their own) or the deaths of parents or other caregivers. Beyond their great cultural significance, weddings were also a declaration of the permanence of unions that masters ought not to break. Implicitly, many slaveowners seemed to have understood community sensibilities in this regard. So, while few jurisdictions recognized the legality of slave marriages, many masters condoned them, in

some cases bestowing gifts on the new couple. Assigning cabins to married couples was an important gesture in this regard, one that assisted later natalist policies.[27]

Contrary to a hoary myth, slave households were not purely matriarchal. Gender relations in the enslaved family were certainly more egalitarian than those prevailing in white households. But fathers were more often present and played a more consistently active role in the lives of bonded children than has often been appreciated.[28] Paternal bonds were frequently affirmed when enslaved parents gave a boy his father's name. Beyond carrying the names of their parents, chattel offspring were regularly assigned names—both first and last—that linked them to grandparents, aunts, uncles, or deceased siblings. Kinship was thereby valorized against ownership. Many names chosen by enslaved parents also had African roots, another assertion of distinct identities. Where masters insisted on conferring names, as may have been typical in the West Indies, they often consulted first with mothers. And where slaveholders unilaterally named them, children generally received from their parents a second name by which they were known within the slave community. The practice of second names, known as "basket names" in parts of the US South, was also widespread in Jamaica and Barbados. Observing community life among slaves, Eliza Frances Andrews, daughter of a large Georgia planter, noted that Black people "have their notions of family pride."[29] Indeed they did.

Samuel Tayler, for instance, was sold from South Carolina into Alabama's cotton kingdom in 1835. Several years later, he was still writing to his former mistress, Elizabeth Blyth, imploring her to remember him to family and friends. "My mind is always dwelling on home, relations, and friends which I would give the world to see," he wrote, before asking Blyth to "remember me also to Sarah, my ma-ma, and Charlotte, my old fellow servant, and Amy Tayler," identifying both kinfolk and friends to whom he sent his affection.[30]

As important as kinship was, the precarity of enslaved life also favored "quasi-kin" relations in which unrelated adults raised children who had lost parents due to sales, early deaths, or parental escapes from bondage. Expanded kinship networks had deep roots in the women-centered experiences of birthing and childrearing. After all, when women with children toiled in the fields it was often elderly bondwomen, usually unrelated, who cared for their infants and young children. These "grannies" became an integral part of household life. And in cases where new mothers took infants to the fields with them, shelter-

ing them in baskets, boxes, or on a quilt under a tree while they worked, other women and men could pick up infants and carry them to their mothers to be nursed during breaks or might shelter them in the event of rain. As obligations to protect, nurture, and teach children were shared across the slave community, the terms "aunt" and "uncle" were commonly used for adults who had no strict kin connection. This is also why the term "parent" was often deployed among Black people in the US South for *any* relative. Sometimes called "fictive kin," these relationships broadened out the everyday relations of care and underpinned fluid and expansive practices of kinship.[31] The very grammar of expanded kinship expressed practices rooted in childrearing networks.

In October 1865, a white clergyman wrote of recently emancipated bondpeople in North Carolina, "All indigent or helpless people are being supported by relatives, parents, or friends." The same principle is embedded in the appeal of freedpersons in Georgia that serves as an epigraph for the next chapter: "We cannot Labor for the Land owners . . . [while] our Infirm and children are not provided for." In South Carolina in the 1860s, Northerners slowly realized that older freedpeople were subsisting with the aid of younger family members who helped with their elders' field work and assisted with their plots. To the chagrin of businessmen from the North, these cooperative work arrangements complicated individualized wage payments by rendering it difficult to distinguish the "lazy" from the "industrious." Yet, relations of Black kinship were highly social, rather than purely individualistic. Such communal solidarities were extensive, as exhibited by the case of the Jamaican estate where all 226 bonded workers withdrew to the bush, demanding to be sold as a group, not separately, in the face of the impending sale of their plantation.[32]

But while enslaved communities had very little chance of staying intact in the face of imminent sale, the odds for family members, while grim, were somewhat better. It was not uncommon for fathers to protest the breaking up of families by taking flight, vowing to return should an impending sale be canceled. In Virginia, one man escaped to the woods for a year upon hearing he had been sold away from his wife and children. He returned only when a neighboring planter agreed to purchase him and reunite his family. Children might do the same. When Thomas Jones of Alabama refused to leave his mother and head to Texas, his master relented.[33]

More than any other group, mothers most actively bargained with owners not to separate them from children and husbands. When denied, they could resort to disobedience, poison, arson, and flight to prevent

family separations. Crucially, "Maternal resistance affirmed that enslaved people were social beings connected to a community of individuals with shared ideals and practices."[34]

FAMILY, COMMUNITY, RESISTANCE

This is an appropriate point to confront Trevor Burnard's claim that "it is misleading even to describe groups of slaves as communities." Plagued by "disorganization, instability, and chaos," he argues, social formations of New World slaves were "hardly communities at all." Such assertions break down under the weight of the evidence. There is no denying, of course, that enslaved life was "marked by personal devastation and social trauma." But that can hardly be the whole story of people who produced enduring kinship relations, vibrant cultural traditions, and rich histories of resistance and revolt. More persuasive is Walter C. Rucker's contention that "African and American-born slaves . . . crafted a dynamic and functional culture despite the denial of their humanity and the limitations on their freedom." Acknowledging "the psychic shock of bondage," John W. Blassingame underscores that Black people in the antebellum South "created several unique cultural forms which lightened their burden of oppression, promoted group solidarity, provided ways of verbalizing aggression, sustaining hope, building self-esteem." As did Sterling Stuckey among other historians, Blassingame identified cultural legacies encompassing music, dance, folklore, religion, clothing, crafts, and social rituals. It is hard to make sense of the durability of bondpeople's unique spiritual beliefs and practices—including Afro-Christianity, Islam, and so-called "witchcraft" systems like obeah and vodou—without recognizing the resilience of New World African communities that ritualized marriage, childbirth, death, burial, and commemoration. Similarly, the persistence of folkloric genres, such as trickster tales and spirituals, alongside uniquely expressive linguistic dialects, speaks to distinctive cultural formations transmitted multigenerationally. Robin Blackburn's observation is thus apt: "As generation succeeded generation, and notwithstanding heavy mortality rates and new arrivals, the slave crews really did become communities, rather than collections of captives."[35]

It was in kin and community networks that enslaved children received instruction; learned speech, folktales, spiritual beliefs, music and songs; and absorbed values of survival and solidarity. Through all these cultural vernaculars, enslaved parents were able to "cushion the shock of bondage" for their children and "teach them values different from those their

masters tried to instil in them."[36] While these values were profoundly social, cultural, and spiritual, they had pragmatic features too. Slave communities, as we have seen, nurtured repertoires of resistance. Members slowed down the pace of work; pushed back against extreme violence by overseers; pilfered from barns, storerooms, and big houses; preserved bonds of extended kinship; and assisted those who ran to forests and swamps to protest punishment, speedup, and reduced rations. In their households, Black children learned the arts of concealment, obscuring from whites what went on in the slave quarters. They cheered and laughed at trickster tales in which the small and cunning outwitted the big and powerful. They relished news about those who had outmaneuvered masters and overseers. They absorbed prayers and spirituals that spoke of a new day of freedom. "I had heard so much about freedom, and of colored people running off and going to Canada," recalled Kentuckian Elijah Marr, "that my mind was busy with this subject even in my young days." Mary Gladdy from Georgia remembered "the whisperings among the slaves—their talking of freedom." Reminiscing about prayer meetings, Anderson and Minerva Edwards remarked, "We prayed a lot to be free." In the same vein, Millie Ann Smith of Rusk County, Texas, recalled, "We hummed our religious songs in the fields while we was working. It was our way of praying for freedom, but the white folks didn't know it."[37]

While most bondpeople chose to stay put with their families and communities rather than attempt a personal escape from bondage, this did not diminish their shared commitment to freedom. In part, staying put reflected the conviction that freedom is a *social* arrangement, a project to be realized in concert *with others*. Indeed, this is why so many fugitives set off with others, notwithstanding the risks of group escapes; and it is why many who took off on their own did so only after family members had been sold away.[38] Yet most bondpeople did not flee, channeling their aspirations toward freedom instead into struggles to limit the demands of bonded labor—and thereby to increase the time for recreation, self-production, and family and social life.

In her superb study of the *emancipation circuit* through which bondpeople built freedom during and after the Civil War in the United States, Thulani Davis illustrates the practice of mass democratic assemblies through which Black people articulated their conception of a new citizenship, including the rights of labor. And she highlights the presence of *organic intellectuals* in Black communities who gave intellectual expression to practices of freedom nurtured there. Rather than emerging in

one fell swoop, the participatory democratic culture built by Black people during this era was rooted in older forms of solidarity developed in opposition to the slave system. Julie Saville's study of freedpeople in South Carolina during this period also charts the presence of councils for self-government on occupied estates. Throughout that state, mass meetings of newly freed people issued collective pledges, declarations, and petitions. They organized popular police forces, administered social services, and rebuffed attempts by former slaveowners to reclaim plantations. As much as forces of chaos afflicted bonded and newly freed people, they were remarkably adept at organizing for emancipation on single estates or at regional gatherings and conventions.[39]

Of course, solidarity and a thirst for liberty could coexist with insecurity, selfishness, and feelings of inferiority. Bonded people squabbled, fought, and hurt one another. These are facts of life in any society founded on domination, hunger, and fear. Moreover, there were genuine social divisions within enslaved communities. Sometimes these revolved around conflicts involving drivers, enslaved men who pushed their fellows at work on behalf of the owners. We know too that slave rebellions were often betrayed by more cautious and self-regarding members of the community, often in efforts to curry favor with masters and overseers. What is remarkable, however, is how often so many enslaved people rose above the debilitating effects of violence and oppression, conflict and division to affirm the dream of freedom for all and to protect those who resisted the slave system. Writing of the Caribbean, Hilary Beckles describes "a constant stream of rebellious sentiment that infused the enslaved community."[40]

A robust sense of group solidarity inspired many bonded people to shelter and protect those who fled, pilfered, malingered, or wandered off the plantation at night without permission. Burnard acknowledges as much when he describes the collective hostility directed at a Jamaican slave who had informed on another for drinking. Only a community with intrinsically shared values can ostracize a bondsperson for betraying a neighbor. In the aftermath of a slave rebellion in 1736, the colonial government of Antigua concluded that the scale of the revolt provided "an extraordinary Proof of the fidelity of the slaves to each other, and the contrary to their Masters."[41]

SPIRITUALITY, RITUALS, WORK

Few things more indubitably define the continuity of a community than its dedication to honoring the dead and their legacies. Ceremonies, ritu-

als, burials, and prayers for the deceased link the living to their ancestors, proclaiming their dignity and persistence. "Africans and their descendants," writes Vincent Brown, "drew vital communal sustenance and political power from their participation in funerals . . . the enslaved used last rites to affirm their shared humanity and articulate their own principles of moral and social interaction. When social conflict arose, slaves drew on the values expressed through relations with the dead to challenge the domination and authority of masters."[42] In fact, nighttime funeral gatherings, fueled by memories of ancestors, were often occasions for planning strikes and rebellions. Aware of this, the Jamaican assembly in 1816 prohibited burials at night.

Spiritual beliefs and practices—from Christianity to Islam, vodou, West African belief systems, and more—served as sources of comfort, dignity, joy, and community. Eluding efforts by masters to regulate their religious lives, enslaved people regularly carved out spaces of their own for worship and celebration in woods, cabins, and hollows. Here, spirituality often joined with freedom dreams. When they gathered on their own, recounted a former bondwoman from Louisiana, "they used to pray for freedom."[43]

It may be true that the enslaved family was less stable in much of the West Indies by comparison with the antebellum South and that this hampered efforts to build durable communities. In part, skewed sex ratios (in which male slaves significantly outnumbered females) along with much lower rates of birth and survival for children hindered family formation in many New World slave societies. Nevertheless, bondpeople throughout the West Indies too built families consisting of married parents and children. On Lord Seaford's three Jamaican estates, nearly 80 percent of the 301 enslaved household units were occupied by male/female couples. Even the evidence Burnard provides for Thomas Thistlewood's Jamaican plantation shows an increasing prevalence over time of the same family form: the married slave couple with children. William Taylor of Jamaica told a committee of the House of Lords in 1832, "The attachments of the negro to his family, his home, and the grave of his ancestors is [sic] well known." Kamau Braithwaite's conclusion with respect to Jamaica seems apt: "the slave's sense of family was not as disorganised as some contemporary and modern accounts insist."[44] In the face of very real forces of fragmentation, communities rooted in vigorous kinship networks fostered solidarity and mutual aid.

The experience of collectivized labor was a crucial realm in which bondpeople forged communal bonds and modes of resistance. In the

shadow of the whip, gangs of workers moved to the collective rhythms of song and cooperated to protect those who were slowed by size, ailment, or sickness. While coordinated movement was the very heart of the gang system, it featured in task work as well. Discussing that system in All Saints Parish, South Carolina, Charles Joyner remarked, "Moving across the fields in a row hoeing side-by-side to the rhythm of work songs, the slaves imposed a group consciousness on their field work. The task system treated them as individuals with individual work assignments; nevertheless, they continued to work in groups, corresponding to work patterns widespread in West Africa. Stronger and faster slaves helped weaker and slower ones to keep up with the group."[45]

Perhaps the greatest proof of the vigorous community life of enslaved peoples is provided by the networks of communication and self-organization that sustained resistance, from temporary escapes by individuals to mass rebellions. C. L. R. James was among the first to make this central to study of the revolution in Saint-Domingue. Since that time, historians have increasingly appreciated the sophisticated social networks that underpinned enslaved resistance and rebellion throughout the New World. Let us begin with two instances from the Civil War in the United States. In February 1862, forty-eight bondpeople fled from a Grahamville, South Carolina, plantation. Over four days, these fugitives traveled fifteen miles to a Union Army encampment at Port Royal, hiding at night and commandeering small boats to elude Confederate pickets. Or take the case of four Union soldiers who escaped from a South Carolina Confederate prison two years later. For three weeks these soldiers were escorted over 300 miles to a Union camp in Knoxville by at least thirty Black guides. Groups of two or three guides fed them, sheltered them, and led them through backcountry routes before passing them on to a new group. The degree of coordination was exceptional and unmistakably demonstrates durable community networks.[46]

Turning to full-fledged slave revolts, Michael Craton rightly observes that "at every stage there was far more planning and calculation than any whites recognized" at the time. In the case of the Demerara rebellion of 1823, the uprising of up to 12,000 bondpeople was prepared and coordinated through a complex organizational network that bridged communities, regions, and ethnic groups. As in most slave revolts, the Demerara rebels swore oaths and preserved anonymity by storming estates other than those on which they worked. Putting managers and overseers in the stocks, they seized weapons and ammunition, leaving guards in place as they moved on to neighboring plantations.[47]

Like every mass upheaval, there were moments of confusion and personal vengeance. But what most stands out is the impressive degree of coordination and discipline. Mass insurrectionary movements like these could only have emerged from rich and vigorous subaltern cultures embodied in alternative geographies of space and place.

CHAPTER 9

Cultures of Freedom

We cannot Labor for the Land owners . . . [while] our Infirm and children are not provided for and are not allowed to educate or learn . . . We are a Working Class of People.

—Petition from Black People of Liberty County, Georgia, 1865

Enslaved people inhabited a *carceral landscape*, to use Walter Johnson's resonant term.[1] It was a bounded space governed by curfews, passes, punishments, and armed patrols. The power relations of plantation slavery were etched into its architecture, beginning with the dimensions of the big house, which towered over work yards, slave quarters, kitchens, barns, stables, and workshops. Yet, both within and beyond this carceral landscape, at its margins and in its interstices, lurked a *rival geography*, alternative spaces that, at least partially, eluded the control of the ruling class. It began within the worksites themselves, where kitchens and craft shops—for sewing, spinning, carpentry, blacksmithing, and more—were often regarded as Black spaces. It continued into the yards that connected workshops, gardens, and slave dwellings. Even sites for laundry, sewing, spinning, and raising and slaughtering animals were claimed by Black people as *their* domains of work and social interaction. Within sight of the Big House, these were places where Black children played, where people gossiped, laughed, and sang to the commotion of social life. Beyond the Big House and the work yards lay the dwellings and gardens that bondpeople fashioned into places of subsistence labor, family, kinship, worship, and community, all "typified by a kind of autonomy fundamentally antagonistic to the principles of slavery."[2]

After work hours, semiautonomous spaces expanded beyond the slave quarters to include provision grounds, pastures, forests, rivers,

bayous, swamps, creeks, and all the hidden pathways that linked subterranean movements of enslaved people.

> Their landscapes were crisscrossed by the trails that led to scenes of communal activities . . . Here would stand a cornhouse, perhaps, that was from time to time illicitly opened, by the loosening of boards in the gable end, to supplement the rations of hungry families . . . Beyond the houses and granaries, but well marked in the memory, were the places deep in the woods where the slaves might slaughter and barbeque the semi-wild hogs that bore on their ears and rumps the marks of a master's claim to possession. The scattering of settlement through a wooded countryside that enabled the Anglo-Virginian masters to space their property boundaries widely also allowed the covert activities of the blacks to maintain an alternative territorial system.[3]

Fugitives traversed this rival geography as they hid from overseers, owners, and slave patrols and as they located food and shelter. Nearly every story of escape describes covert movements through woods, along creeks and rivers, across swamps. "The woods and swamps," declared Solomon Northup, "are continually filled with runaways." Describing his third escape attempt, John P. Parker wrote, "I hid in my friend the forest."[4] It was a story repeated by Charles Ball, James Pennington, Harriet Jacobs, Isaac Mason, Andrew Jackson, Harriet Tubman, Northup Solomon, and so many others. Where the spatial order of the plantation was defined by its boundedness, the rival geography of the enslaved teemed with mobility, "the movement of bodies, objects, and information within and around plantation space."[5]

This mobile geography also comprised a night world. Not only did fugitives usually flee once darkness fell; they traveled by the light of the moon and the compass of the North Star. Even for those not taking flight, nighttime was when they did much of their real living: laboring for themselves in gardens and provision grounds; fishing in rivers, creeks, and ponds; visiting lovers, children, and friends; gathering for song, dance, prayer, and celebration; pilfering and selling appropriated goods; plotting rebellion. Charlie Grant, a bondman from South Carolina, recalled that his grandmother tended her garden at night, "especially moonlight nights," since her daylight hours were consumed by forced labor. So secure were bondpeople in their navigation of alternative spaces that one Virginia freedperson recalled how they would hold nighttime gatherings "right in de open," confident that they could elude slave patrollers should they need to escape down hills, across rivers, and through forests.[6] Night was also a time for "prowling" and "rambling,"

for unauthorized movements, transactions, liaisons, and celebrations. "Night was the slave's holiday," recalled bondman Allen Parker. Slaveowners knew it and resented it. "Night is their day," complained one North Carolina planter. It was a constant refrain. A planter from Virginia told Frederick Law Olmsted that his bonded people conserved their energy during daytime toil so that they might be "lively and ready to go off on a frolic at night."[7]

For planters, night prowls were synonymous with criminality. In 1770, Landon Carter lamented that Manuel had "returned to his night-walking—he turned thief as before." A year later, he was bemoaning that "Peter the plowman" was once again a "night Walker." Enslaved people treasured and defended their nocturnal revelries. In rural Virginia, nighttime partiers put people on lookout to warn of patrols, positioning ropes and vines to entangle patrolmen and their horses. In 1789 the Barbados assembly advised that "both sexes are frequently travelling all night." The same year, the Jamaica Committee of Council reported on the frequency of "Negro plays or Nocturnal Assemblies, where they dance immoderately, drink to excess, sleep on the damp Ground" while engaging in "Acts of Sensuality and Intemperance." Nearly fifty years later, planters in two South Carolina counties formed an association to clamp down on illicit slave activities after dark, complaining that "hundreds of negroes . . . are every night, and at all hours of the night, prowling about the country." It was rare, of course, for night ramblings to be harbingers of insurrection. But it is no accident that the vast majority of uprisings were launched around midnight.[8]

Some parts of the rival geography of the enslaved were bathed in light. This was particularly true of slave markets where bonded people sold produce, poultry, clothing, and handicrafts; where they bartered, socialized, and carried on. Sunday markets run by Blacks, preeminently women, might attract thousands of participants in cities like Charleston, South Carolina; Kingston, Jamaica; Bridgetown, Barbados; and Le Cap, Saint-Domingue. Bondpeople marketed cotton and sugar cultivated on their own grounds; clothing or furniture made in their quarters and workshops; cakes they had baked; wood they had gathered; jewelry they had crafted; fish they had caught; goods they had pilfered—all in efforts to earn cash with which to improve conditions of life. Many enslaved people occasionally saved small sums of money; some even deposited cash with their masters, who entered it into account books for safekeeping. So extensive was the participation of enslaved people in markets that, in Edward Long's estimate, as much as one-fifth of

Jamaica's money supply was in the hands of slaves by the late eighteenth century. In the British colony of Demerara in the years before 1823, enslaved people contributed £100 to £200 in cash annually to the chapel run by the London Missionary Society. In South Carolina, bonded people were producing 7 percent of the state's cotton crop on their own time by the 1840s.[9]

The planter class was deeply ambivalent about these activities. As much as they gave enslaved people a stake in the plantation system, specifically in their gardens and provision grounds, independent marketing also fostered a sense of autonomy beyond the supervision of the planter. From South Carolina to Barbados, laws for "the Better Governing of Negroes" were often meant to combat unruly cultures of marketing. And female unruliness was a special target of attack. The *South Carolina Gazette* complained in 1772, for instance, that in Charles Town's Lower Market, there "constantly resort a large number of loose, idle, and disorderly negro women, who are seated there from morn till night, and buy and sell on their own accounts, what they please, in order to pay their wages." In spite of such complaints, slave marketing just kept growing.[10]

AGAINST DISPOSSESSION: RIVAL GEOGRAPHIES AND PROLETARIAN LANDSCAPES

Recognizing the extent of slave gardens and provision grounds, some scholars argue that these practices comprised a "peasant breach" through which enslaved people could work their own lands like small farmers.[11] No doubt, the manifold ways slaves produced and exchanged commodities, from vegetables to cotton to handicrafts, complicates the picture of Atlantic slavery, revealing significant independent production and engagement in a petty market economy. Crucially, all this speaks to the importance of land, particularly provision grounds, for slave communities. Yet, too often, commentators neglect two crucial realities: first, that allotments of land represented a displaced form of wages in kind; and second, that *proletarian* struggle was indispensable to securing the so-called "peasant breach."

On the first point, Lenin's analysis of the allotments of land to largely proletarianized Russian "peasants" in the last quarter of the nineteenth century is illuminating. Providing plots to agricultural workers actually served to secure a proletarianized labor force, Lenin argued, describing it as "the capitalist system of providing the estate with agricultural

workers by allotting patches of land to them." The allotment, he continued, should be understood "as wages in kind."[12] For the capitalist landowner in Russia, as for the New World planter, provision of small plots of land provided a cheap means for reproducing agrarian labor-power. They displaced costs of social reproduction onto household labor on gardens and provision grounds, in forests, rivers, and lakes. Like all such socially reproductive labor, this work was outside direct circuits of capital but indispensable to them.[13]

As necessary as gardens and grounds were to enslaved reproduction, planters sought to restrict the amount of time bondpeople had for them. Enslaved people, on the other hand, struggled for time *away* from plantation labor in order to augment such household production. As Dale Tomich remarked, "The condition for the autonomous development of provision ground cultivation and marketing was the slaves' appropriation of a portion of the labor time of the estate." It follows that "slave labor combined both 'proletarian labor' in the cane fields, mill, and boiling house, and the 'peasant labor' of the provision ground. This 'peasant' dimension of slave labor emerges within its 'proletarian' dimension and forms a counterpoint to it."[14] Proletarian struggles over time thus carved out alternative spaces and hours of "peasant" production, exchange, and recreation. And this required securing possession (at least in practice) of land and the goods produced there. If the primitive accumulation of capital pivots on dispossession from land, as it surely does, then these struggles represented a countermovement to dispossession. Rival geographies were, to an important extent, *spaces of reappropriation*, forged through battles to reclaim time and space. Such spaces were consolidated as enslaved people reclaimed their own life energies and marked out places free from the dictates of the whip and the clock.

It is sometimes forgotten that alternative landscapes were also found in urban settings. This was especially true in port towns, where thousands of free and bonded Black workers loaded and unloaded boats and ships, made up maritime crews, and worked in the cafes, bars, hotels, and brothels scattered around the fringes of dockyards and levees. New Orleans, Bridgetown, Le Cap, Kingston, Baltimore, Charleston, St. Louis, Memphis, and many other waterfront cities held substantial Black areas of life, work, and recreation. New Orleans was the site of a thriving Black community centered on Congo Square, or *Place Congo*, in the city's historic French Quarter. In the "Black Rookeries" area, taverns and coffee houses joined with gambling houses, brothels, and boarding rooms, usually Black-owned, in a distinctive working-class

environment. Similar areas, albeit on a smaller scale, were to be found in St. Louis, Nashville, Baltimore, Louisville, and throughout the Caribbean. Over 9,000 enslaved people lived in Bridgetown, Barbados, in 1817, for instance, half of them female domestic workers. That town too featured an energetic Black culture and economy, which included taverns and hotels, sometimes owned and run by women of color. In these urban settings, Black people blazed alternative landscapes—and fugitive spaces for runaways—that connected street corners, back alleys, docks, saloons, brothels, and grog shops, where free and enslaved Blacks, sometimes in the company of poor whites, like sailors, socialized, gambled, drank, gossiped, and cavorted.[15]

Although many plantation workers came into contact with the Black spaces of urban life on market days, during hiring-out periods, or when the transport of plantation goods brought them to towns, rural spaces remained central to their lives. In these semiautonomous landscapes—gardens, slave quarters, provision grounds, places of celebration and worship, hidden pathways, sites of independent marketing activity, and urban Black neighborhoods—bondpeople cultivated longings for emancipation.

Without a doubt, land was central to these dreams of liberation. This too is in keeping with the historical experience of working classes, especially in the nineteenth century. For proletarians, in both urban and rural settings, demands for land have often been the linchpin of programs for social improvement. Sometimes emancipatory claims to land have taken communal form—as in the agrarian communism of the Digger radicals in England in the 1640s or among the revolutionary followers of Thomas Spence a century and a half later. Often an agrarian socialism based on small-scale ownership of the land was a predominant idiom of plebeian radicalism. In one form or another, a radical agrarianism focused on land reform was a central pivot of working-class movements in both nineteenth-century Britain and the United States. Discussing workers in England during the early part of the century, E. P. Thompson observed, "It is an historical irony that it was not the rural labourers, but the urban workers who mounted the greatest coherent national agitation for the return of the land." Black agrarian radicalism of similar inspiration figured decisively in freedpeople's demands coming out of the Civil War. In some settings, such as Virginia and South Carolina, aspirations for communal ownership of land also animated Black demands into Reconstruction.[16] At other times, the foremost demand was the division of large estates for redistribution as family farms. In both forms, dispossession from the land was to be

undone by *repossession*. Direct producers were to be reunited with their primary means of producing the goods of life: the land. But this was no narrowly economic commitment. Land was treated not as a commodity but as the ground of shared histories. Historians of the US South remark:

> Former slaves . . . generally did not view land as property in the abstract or as a commodity . . . Land was a link to generations past and future and a foundation for family and community among the living. Nor did former slaves fully subscribe to Northern conceptions of absolute property. Instead, rights to particular tracts might bear little resemblance to the specifications of a deed. When left to their own devices, freedpeople often allowed for overlapping rights in any one property.[17]

In short, land was to serve as the foundation of reconstituted communities that preserved social connections and obligations. As Julie Saville has shown, during the Civil War freedpeople in South Carolina often rebuffed offers to buy land on which they had never lived and worked, preferring instead to stay in the vicinity of their former plantations. Their "claims to land rooted in non-market notions of economy" articulated a noncommodity sensibility—in which land was profoundly tied to kinship, community, and history.[18]

As much as "forty acres and a mule" may have been specific to the struggles of Black Reconstruction in the United States, the slogan expressed a general aspiration of bondpeople to overcome dispossession by seizing and securing land grounded in kinship and history. It is an aspiration that persists today among mass landless workers' movements in countries like Brazil and Bolivia. And, as Ricado Jacobs has documented for South Africa, we continue to observe there a "proletariat with peasant characteristics" as dispossessed people fight for land to raise crops and livestock, even in urban spaces.[19] It is vital to appreciate that all such efforts to undo dispossession have a proletarian character grounded in the search for means of life beyond toil for capital.

MAROON COLONIES AND THE ANTINOMIES OF LANDED LOCALISM

Arguably the most dramatic struggles for the land involved bands of fugitive slaves that established Maroon colonies. Typically, such groups organized peasant-type farming communities, and supplemented cultivation by hunting, fishing, raiding, and trading. Surveying the Caribbean, Kamau Braithwaite identified six "main nexuses" of Maroon societies, some of which have endured into the present.[20]

Maroon communities varied in size from a few dozen to several thousand. They tended to flourish on larger land masses with extensive forests, mountain ranges, and swamps, where fugitive camps were largely inaccessible and easily defended. The Blue Mountains in Jamaica and the Dismal Swamp in the US Upper South, while decidedly different environments, both met these criteria. At times, Maroon colonies operated as warrior communities that allied with others—free Blacks, Indigenous peoples, even white servants—in armed struggle against the slave system. Such was the case with Maroon groups in three North Carolina counties during the summer of 1821. Similarly, the fugitive Negro Fort community in Florida—with perhaps 700 people at its peak, a cadre of about 250 armed soldiers, an established farming economy, and an active trading system—attracted escaped bondpeople and the support of local Choctaw and Seminole peoples. Although the fort was seized by US troops in 1816, dispersed Blacks and Seminoles continued to mount armed resistance for several more years. For decades after, the maroons of the Dismal Swamp supported the Underground Railroad by providing shelter to fugitives heading north.[21]

However, the preservation of Maroon colonies could come at the expense of bondpeople yet to achieve their freedom. In Jamaica, where as many as 20,000 may have lived in outlaw villages, the colonial government, having failed to defeat the two main fugitive communities, negotiated treaties with them. In return for nonaggression, these treaties required Maroons to return runaways and participate in suppressing slave rebellions. Not only did some Jamaican Maroons actually own Black slaves; Maroon forces were also violent opponents of bondpeople who rose up in the great Christmas rebellion of 1831. One commentator appropriately concludes, "The chief opponents of the slave society had now become one of its main props . . . the Maroons became increasingly out of touch with the emerging spirit of freedom in Jamaica."[22] Yet that "emerging spirit of freedom" just kept growing, often wrapped in an ethics of labor.

ETHICS, ECONOMICS, AND THE RIGHTS OF LABOR

Among other idioms, classic working-class movements have regularly articulated themselves in two oppositional registers. One involves a rudimentary labor ethic, sometimes codified in a labor theory of value, according to which workers have a right to the wealth they create. Related to this, secondly, is an alternative political economy focused on

reappropriating time for the producers. The latter had particular significance for Marx, who extolled the achievement of the Ten Hour Act in Britain as a victory for "the political economy of the working class."[23] Enslaved people in the New World displayed both of these constitutive elements of working-class culture.

The labor ethic comes into sharp relief in planter complaints regarding the habitual "theft" and "pilfering" in which bondpeople engaged. Eggs, chickens, cotton, tobacco, sugar, liquor, corn, clothing, kitchen goods—all of these and more were regularly snatched from the master class. John Stewart in his *View of Jamaica* (1823) declared that slaves were "strongly addicted to theft." More troubling, "To pilfer from their masters they consider no crime, though to rob a fellow slave is accounted heinous," he wrote. Not only was stealing the most common transgression committed by bonded people; it was also one widely condoned by their peers. Members of slave communities frequently abetted thefts by others. They might provide intelligence to the transgressors, conceal information from masters and managers, or sneak food to fugitive thieves hiding near the estate. Evidence from colonial North Carolina reveals that the larger the number of slaves on a plantation, the higher the "crime" rate, suggesting greater safety in numbers for perpetrators. Pilfering involved children too, who appropriated fruit from orchards or sugar and salt from the big house, usually with the knowledge and support of their elders. Poor whites and free Blacks might also be partners, particularly when they acted as fences for stolen property such as rustled livestock.[24] The moral codes of the slave community betrayed few qualms about these practices. Olmsted recounts the tale of a Virginia "housemaid" apprehended with stolen items in her possession. Interrogated by her mistress, the bondwoman invoked the teachings of Aunt Ann, a respected Black elder: "Ole Aunt Ann says it allers right for us poor coloured people to 'popiate whatever of the wite folk's blessings de Lord puts in our way." Note here the concept of appropriation ("to 'popiate"), rather than of theft, and the assumed right of *reappropriation*. In celebrating acts of pilfering from the master class, enslaved people insisted they were simply reclaiming some of what was rightfully theirs. Olmsted continues:

> It is told me as a singular fact, that everywhere on the plantations, the agrarian notion has become a fixed point of the negro system of ethics: that the result of labour belongs to the labourer, and on this ground, even the religious feel justified in using "massa's" property for their own temporal benefit. This they term "taking," and it is never admitted to be a reproach to a

> man among them that he is charged with it, though "stealing," or taking from another than their master, and particularly from one another, is so. They almost universally pilfer from the household stores when they have a safe opportunity.[25]

Here lay a distinctive moral economy. When one enslaved person robs another—that is stealing. Taking from the master is a different matter entirely. It is reappropriation since "the result of labour belongs to the labourer." Olmsted refers to this as an "agrarian notion" because so much of early socialism advocated an agrarian law to limit the holdings of landowners and to redistribute land to the rural poor. But the issue in play here is somewhat different. It is less about seizing land than it is about the right to take *products of labor* considered rightfully one's own. It is about appropriating from the appropriators, reclaiming what *they* have stolen. And the justification is a rudimentary one: labor is entitled to what it produces. This is, of course, a *labor ethic*. It underwrote a moral economy grounded on the rights of the producers. When a fugitive from slavery named Luke recounted his flight to freedom, he admitted to Harriet Jacobs that he had stolen money from the "speculator" who owned him. His justification was simple and straightforward: "I'd bin workin all my day fur dem cussed whites, an got no pay but kicks and cuffs." To which Jacobs, formerly enslaved herself, adds, "When a man has his wages stolen from him, year after year, and the laws sanction and enforce the theft, how can he be expected to have more regard to honesty than has the man who robs him? . . . I confess that I agree with poor, ignorant, much-abused Luke in thinking he had a right to that money, as a portion of his unpaid wages." The insistence that theft merely restored "unpaid wages" was widespread. West Indian overseer Charles Campbell reported that a bondman, confronted for stealing a lump of sugar, retorted, "Who planted the cane?" In the Dutch colony of Berbice, an enslaved man named Cesar was interrogated after the 1763 rebellion there. Asked how he could justify taking all the goods he had seized from his master's closets, Cesar declared "he was old, and had worked for it all, and therefore it was all his due." Former South Carolina slave Louisa Gause told interviewers that enslaved people often helped themselves to melons and corn belonging to their owners. In doing so, she averred, a slave "never take nothin' but what been belong to him." In some cases, in fact, workers literally "stole" the product of their own labor, as when women pilfered bits of the cotton they had planted and harvested in order to make clothing for themselves.[26]

When they stole, said Kenneth Stampp, "slaves did not thereby repudiate law and morality: rather, they formulated legal and moral codes of their own."[27] Quite right. But he ought to have added that these codes were shot through with a labor ethic. As with many "free" wage laborers, this producer ethos was often couched in religious terms, as when an enslaved man from South Carolina explained that pilfering by slaves was not theft because "the Bible says a man has a right to the sweat of his eyebrows." And at the end of the Civil War in the United States, a young woman who had been enslaved by George Washington's great-great-nephew told an inquirer, "You know the Bible says every one must live by the sweat of his own eyebrow. But John A. Washington, he lived by the sweat of *my* eyebrow."[28] Predictably, Eugene Genovese entirely failed to grasp the moral structure of this plebeian culture. Trapped in his liberal modernization model, Genovese maintained that theft and lying on the part of slaves "weakened their self-respect" and caused them to suffer internally for their deceit. For Genovese, the enslaved ought to have replaced their "precapitalist" dispositions with proper market behaviors based on bourgeois honesty and plain dealing. After all, he pontificated, the deceptions practiced by bondpeople deprived them of "a morality necessary to function in a modern economy and society."[29] Such colossal ignorance of the labor ethic that has characterized proletarian cultures far and wide ignores the plebeian morality with which bondpeople pilfered plantation goods guilt free.

Let us listen again to Charles Ball. During his years of bondage, one master assigned Ball to his fishery. Loosely supervised, Ball and his coworkers not only illicitly consumed some of their catch; on occasion Ball took some to sell. And he did so without the slightest pang of conscience:

> I was never acquainted with a slave who believed that he violated any rule of morality by appropriating to himself anything that belonged to his master, if it was necessary to his comfort. The master might call it theft and brand it with the name of crime; but the slave reasoned differently, when he took a portion of his master's goods, to satisfy his hunger, keep himself warm, or to gratify his passion for luxurious enjoyment.
>
> The slave sees his master residing in a spacious mansion, riding in a fine carriage, dressed in costly clothes, and attributes the possession of all these enjoyments to his own labor.[30]

Henry Bibb, a fugitive from Kentucky, wrote in a remarkably similar vein. When the outraged son of one of Bibb's former owners condemned the escaped man as a thief, Bibb did not flinch. He readily admitted that

he had returned to Kentucky to "steal" some of his family members and that in the process he had helped himself to a sack of wheat. He further agreed that he had pilfered other items:

> And who had the better right to eat of the fruits of my own hard earnings than myself? Many a long summer's day have I toiled with my wife and other slaves, cultivating his father's fields, and gathering in his harvest, under the scorching rays of the sun, without half enough to eat, or clothes to wear, and at the same time his meat-house was filled with bacon and bread stuff; his dairy with butter and cheese; his barn with grain, husbanded by the unrequited toil of the slaves. And yet if a slave presumed to take a little from the abundance which he had made by his own sweat and toil, to supply the demands of nature, to quiet the craving appetite which is sometimes almost irresistible, it is still called stealing by slaveholders.
>
> But I did not regard it as stealing then, I do not regard it as such now . . . I hold that I had a just right to what I took, because it was the labor of my own hands.[31]

The terminology here is intriguing, as is the moral argument. Bibb describes his former master's goods as "the fruits of my own hard earnings," as wealth the slave "had made by his own sweat and toil," and as "the labor of my own hands." Harriet Jacobs likewise insisted that pilfering of food could not be considered a crime for a slave "when his own labor had been stolen from him." Throughout the world of plantation slavery, bondpeople regularly articulated such critiques of exploitation. Recounting a particularly unhappy incident, Isaac Mason invoked the saying, "Some men live by the sweat of their own brow, and some live by the sweat of others."[32] Many planters recognized that bondpeople were convinced of their right to take from their masters. South Carolina J. Motte Alston related that his slave Cudjo "looked upon my property as belonging to him." Interviewed after the Civil War, a South Carolina bondwoman known as Aunt Phyllis described the new house built by her master for $20,000. Asked where her master got such money, the old woman pointed to her arm, declaring, "Dat's whar he got he money—out o' dat black skin he got he money." The same rhetoric was deployed by Black abolitionists in the North. In 1862, John Rock, the first African American to practice law before the US Supreme Court, wrote a scathing denunciation of President Lincoln's plan to compensate slaveholders for their lost chattel property. "Why talk about compensating masters," he asked. "The property of the South is by right the property of the slave." In the same vein, after the defeat of the Confederacy, former Virginia slave Bayley Wyat made a poignant case for freed people seizing the lands they formerly worked.

"We has a right to the land where we are located . . . didn't we clear the land, and raise the crops of corn, of cotton, of tobacco, of rice, of sugar, of everything," he asked.[33]

This producer ethic could carry an insurrectionary tinge. French General Francois-Joseph Pamphile de Lacroix, who fought against Toussaint Louverture's revolutionary army, reports a fascinating conversation between a French officer and a captured insurgent. Asked why the slaves burned everything they came across, the man replied, in Lacroix's paraphrase, "We have a right to burn what we cultivate because a man has the right to dispose of his own labour." On other occasions, as in Berbice in 1816, insurgent bondpeople might try to seize the estates rather than burn them down.[34]

As much as stealing from the master class involved reclaiming the products of labor, it also included the reappropriation of time and space. One freedperson in Virginia recounted that, when enslaved people slipped away from their quarters for illicit gatherings, they called it "stealin' the meeting." Another ex-slave from Virginia recalled bondpeople sneaking away for religious meetings. "We couldn't serve God unless we stole to de cabin or de woods," they recollected.[35] Arguably, no form of theft was more celebrated among bondpeople than self-theft—*stealing away*. While fugitives regularly absconded with food, clothing, money, horses, knives, and other weapons, their greatest transgression was *self-stealing*. To "steal away" was *self-appropriation*. And it is why all claims to freedom were inherently criminal in slave society. To claim a "property" in oneself was to violate the property rights of masters. And it again reminds us why bondpeople were not constant or fixed capital. Dead labor does not plan, organize, and fight for freedom. But enslaved people did. Over and over again.[36]

STRUGGLES OVER TIME: THE ALTERNATIVE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE ENSLAVED

Unlike wage earners, slaves, says one historian, "did not engage in a daily fight over the length of the working day."[37] This is demonstrably wrong. To begin with, wage laborers do not contest the length of the working day on a *daily* basis. Most days, they have no option but to put in the eight, ten, or more hours demanded by employers. It is the *intensity* of the workday that they battle over every day, just as enslaved people did. The struggle over the length of the working day happens more episodically, during strikes or political campaigns. Secondly, the

length of the workday or the workweek—in short, the overall hours of bonded labor—*was* a dominant theme of enslaved resistance. In demanding reduction in hours of work for their owners, bondpeople affirmed a *political economy of life*. Literally so: mortality rates fell, and life expectancy rose for groups like Barbadian sugar workers whenever they managed to reduce their hours of forced work.[38] Little surprise then that enslaved people fought vigorously, sometimes violently, over matters of time.

In late December 1701, fifteen slaves in Antigua killed their master, Major Samuel Martin, apparently because he insisted that they work during their Christmas holiday. The message was duly received: Antiguan planters enshrined in law the right of enslaved people to Christmas holidays. Some years later, one Antiguan slaveowner pronounced it "mad" for a planter "to command his Slaves to work in the Field" on Sundays. "Slaves have (or, which is the same, think they have) some Rights and Privileges, of which they are as tenacious as any Freeman upon Earth can be of theirs, and which no Master of common Sense will once attempt to violate," he conceded. It was not the last time rebellion provoked laws guaranteeing time away from forced labor. Following the Stono Rebellion of September 1739, the South Carolina assembly established Sunday as a mandatory day off from plantation work. Bondpeople rarely left matters there, fighting for, and sometimes winning, even more time away from the fields. In 1841, newly arrived Texas overseer John Bauer wrote his employer that on his first Saturday at the estate "the negroes claimed half the day for themselves." They also, he reported, "claim two hours in the middle of the day." The staking of such claims reflected fluctuating balances of power between management and labor. Sometimes shifts could happen quite rapidly, as on a Louisiana sugar estate, occupied in 1862 by Union troops, where bondpeople informed their overseer that they would no longer work on Christmas Day. "Never having had a chance to keep it before," they announced, "they would avail themselves of the privalege [sic] now."[39]

When bondpeople gave up their "own" time to work for their owners, they regularly insisted on wages in return. In 1819, bonded workers on the Rosehall cotton plantation in Berbice refused Sunday work after their master failed to pay them for labor on the three previous Sundays. Eight years later, on the same colony's Goedland plantation, enslaved workers protested after their master failed to pay them for work "on *our* Sunday," as one rebel put it. Promised a guilder apiece for this extra work by their owner, they complained to officials when he did not pay

up. Their claim to have worked on "*our* Sunday" poignantly illustrates the reclamation of time from their masters. By the late eighteenth century, enslaved toilers in Jamaica had obtained another day off every fortnight, except for peak crop times. In Martinique by the 1830s, many of the enslaved had secured Saturdays as well as Sundays for rest, recreation, and work for themselves. According to a Martinican official in the 1840s, "There would be discontent if the proprietors took away the free Saturday . . . To try to abolish it once it has been established would be to provoke disorder and revolt." Indeed, when Martinican bondpeople believed planters were increasing night work to circumvent their reduced hours, they revolted. Two hundred and fifty of them refused night work at the Leyritz estate at Basse-Pointe in December 1845. Although their strike was suppressed, slowdowns persisted. By 1847, the island's governor lamented, "There is a fact which is general everywhere . . . it is the slow down of work. Some estimate it at one-tenth, others at one-fifth."[40]

Perhaps nowhere was the struggle for time away from plantation labor more intense than in revolutionary Saint-Domingue. In the early months of the slave revolution, the key demands often focused not on full emancipation, but instead on the four-day workweek and the abolition of the whip. Across the ebbs and flows of the struggle, insistence on reducing coerced labor was a constant. By 1793–94 the most obstinate demand of the assemblies of bonded workers in southern parts of the island was for the four- or five-day workweek. Indeed, hankering for a four-day workweek had been in the air at least since August 1791, when insurgents insisted that the king of France, under the impact of revolution at home, had decreed three days off from work in the colonies. The same demand fueled a rebellion earlier that year in Dominica when bondpeople left the fields and claimed three days off from plantation service each week. In 1807, the governor of Tobago reported that enslaved workers there too were downing their tools to demand three days off. At Robley's estate, the entire workforce walked out to press this claim. "This gang has quitted their work," Governor William Young wrote, "throwing down their hoes together, using the most opprobrious language to their managers and overseers present; and in a movement clearly preconcerted quitted the estate."[41]

More than thirty years later, this goal reemerged at the heart of the mass uprising of bondpeople in Demerara. While aiming for emancipation, enslaved people in the British colony were determined, at minimum, to win more days off from forced labor. Confronting armed Demeraran slave insurgents in August of 1823, Lieutenant Colonel

Leahy (with soldiers at his side) asked the rebels what they wanted. According to a contemporary, "They said two days in the week, and some of them said three . . . Then they said, that 'they wanted their freedom.'" Following another confrontation, one of Leahy's soldiers reported, "Some of the insurgents called out that that they wanted lands, and three days in the week to work for themselves, besides Sunday." This demand kept echoing down the years. Eight years later, enslaved people in Antigua set fire to estates and paraded to the capital to contest the abolition of Sunday markets. They returned to the fields only when they were promised an additional day off from work. During the Civil War in the US, recently freed people worked estates on the Sea Islands under protection of Union troops. In defiance of Northern superintendents and planter capitalists, they refused Saturday labor in the fields, declaring the day to be their own. After the Civil War, hours worked by former bondpeople dropped by roughly a third across much of North Carolina and other parts of the South—yet another indication of the priority freedpeople put on reappropriating time.[42]

Perhaps the most compelling image of insurgent slaves demanding three days off from plantation work is found in the "Treaty of Peace" proposed by rebels in Santana, Brazil, in 1789. Having fled from the fields en masse, these rebels set out nineteen conditions for their return. Two-thirds of these dealt with their work-lives. For instance, the fugitive laborers demanded a 30 percent reduction in sugar-cutting quotas. And in steps toward workers' self-management, they insisted on their right to control the equipment in the sugar mill—"to remain always in possession of the hardware"—and to approve or reject their overseers. They also addressed work hours, demanding Fridays and Saturdays off, alongside Sundays, so that they might have time to "play, relax, and sing any time we wish."[43] The degree to which these demands correlate with—indeed *prefigure*—those issued by radical movements of wage laborers is striking. Especially significant is the way they expressed an alternative political economy of time, one devoted to radically increasing the hours available for self-directed recreation, household production, and festive celebration: to "play, relax, and sing any time we wish."

Slaves consistently tried to reclaim time for life-making. Running away in order to see lovers, spouses, parents, children, and friends reordered the political economy of time, as we have seen. By exiting coerced labor for days or weeks at a time, fugitives redirected their energies to activities of social reproduction. And every insurgent demand for reduced hours reshaped the boundary between unfree labor and activity

devoted to recreation, social life, and production for themselves. Because they typically had access to land—gardens, plots, and provision grounds—"getting enough land was not typically the slaves' chief concern. Time was."[44]

All of these dynamics reinforce my claim that enslaved plantation workers constituted a distinct type of proletariat. After all, central to Marx's theory is that class struggle over capitalist production pivots on two modes of conflict over time. One of these is the contest over the temporalities of production itself—the speed, intensity, and pace of the capitalist work process. The other is the struggle over the absolute amount of time workers are required to produce for capital. Put differently, one register of temporal struggle is focused *within* the production process, while another concerns time *away from* the capitalist work process.

In his 1865 lectures on *Value, Price, and Profit* (*Lohn, Preis und Profit*), Marx applauded workers' efforts to "set limits to the tyrannical usurpations of capital." He proceeded to elaborate the point in vivid terms: "Time is the room of human development. A man who has no free time to dispose of, whose whole lifetime, apart from the mere physical interruptions by sleep, meals, and so forth, is absorbed by his labour for the capitalist, is less than a beast of burden. He is a mere machine for producing alien wealth, broken in body and brutalized in mind."[45] For the proletarian to avoid being turned into "a mere machine" or "less than a beast of burden" requires fighting to reclaim time as "the room of human development." The abstract, alienated, mechanical time of capitalist production is dead time, time separated from life, time that is at most a *means* to a disfigured life. Since the living laborer is tendentially transformed into a mere machine under the dictates of capital's dead time, this conflict embodies a struggle of life against death.

Viewed from the standpoint of production, the gap between the chattel laborer for capital and the wage laborer is not as great as it appears from the standpoint of circulation. At the level of the market, the gap seems absolute. The wage laborer appears as an ostensibly free proprietor of his or her labor-power in contrast with the slave. But seen at the more profound level of production, the wage laborer emerges as persistently dehumanized, as living on the edge of social death—indeed, as threatened with zombification by capital.[46] Exploring these themes of time, life, and death in Marx's critical theory, Massimiliano Tomba argues that once we recognize the temporal struggle of wage laborers as a "struggle between life and death, the trace of continuity between slave-labour and wage-labour becomes visible." Since both modalities

of capitalist exploitation provoke struggles against the dead (abstract) time of capital, it follows that "capitalist slavery is a hyper-disciplined variation of wage-labour."[47] Or, as Nicholas De Genova puts it, by reducing a human being to "labour and nothing but labour," which it makes definitive of Blackness, "slavery supplies capitalism with a defining horizon for *all* labour."[48]

The idea of the chattel laborer as marking a fundamental truth condition of proletarian existence can also be gleaned from the dynamics of social struggle.[49] Analyzing the work of freedpeople beginning the task of Reconstruction, Julie Saville has shown how they viewed themselves as belonging to a working class.[50] And this identity was not magically born the moment the Civil War struck; it had been nurtured across generations of enslaved resistance. Decisive to this were struggles to reduce time spent working for capital. However distinct the legal regimes that governed "free" and chattel workers—and these differences are profound—each group shared a proletarian political economy devoted to reclaiming time for life.

FREEDOM DREAMS

We have already seen former Georgia bondwoman Mary Gladdy's remembrance of "the whisperings among the slaves—their talking of freedom." Notwithstanding such evidence, many historians deny that enslaved people held political values or pursued freedom dreams. Especially glaring is Randy M. Browne's insistence that bondpeople were intent on survival, not liberty. "While historians have long been preoccupied with enslaved peoples fight for 'freedom,'" Browne writes, "this Western abstraction had little ideological resonance for Africans." Instead, he declares, bondpeople focused on economic rights, not political ones; they practiced "a conservative politics of survival."[51]

This line of argument has a long pedigree. It derives from what E. P. Thompson described as "a spasmodic view of history" founded upon "an abbreviated view of economic man."[52] In this perspective, members of the lower orders, lacking political vision, largely react to material circumstances. Discussing the great 1831 rising of the silk weavers of Lyons, one historian writes, "It was not unusual for middle-class commentators to raise such tumults to the status of tragedy by insisting upon a purely social motivation, innocent of politics."[53] Not only is this an injustice to the political intelligence of subaltern actors; it reenacts the surrender of emancipatory hopes characteristic of neoliberalism.

That surrender is then retroactively projected onto the dead. Yet the records of these ancestors speak otherwise. How, to take just one example, do we explain the involvement of bondpeople in the Underground Railroad that assisted runaways in the United States, and in vigilance committees (VCs) that defended Black communities against police and slave catchers? How do we understand the enormous risks they took on behalf of freedom *for others*? And how do we interpret the hundreds of interviews that runaways did with VCs, where they expressed "rich but pragmatic notions of freedom"?[54] Reflecting on traditions of enslaved resistance in the Caribbean, Hilary Beckles has appropriately urged,

> the evidence illustrates fully that slaves made definite political analyses of the power structures they encountered . . . They rebelled when they could, and accommodated when they had to . . .
>
> It can no longer be generally accepted, then, that slaves existed in an atheoretical world which was devoid of ideas, political concepts and an alternative socio-political vision . . . slaves throughout the region consistently rebelled in order to gain freedom.[55]

To be sure, there was a *preservative* politics of survival among enslaved people. At its core, it sought the conservation of life and the expansion of the time and space of life-making beyond the reach of the whip. Resistance to oppression certainly had survival as a goal, as it did improvement in the quality of life. But this continually posed the question of freedom, not as a disembodied ideal, but as a dimension of lived experience. Far from a "Western abstraction," bondpeople throughout the New World appropriated and deepened the eighteenth-century discourse of freedom. Drawing on religious idioms, African traditions, practices of resistance, abolitionist appeals, and revolutionary ideas emanating from Europe and the Americas, they forged their own distinctive doctrines of emancipation. In so doing, they reworked the meaning of freedom, pushing beyond its liberal iterations toward a radical universalism. This vision of freedom embraced the right to the full product of their labor and to ownership of land, along with the end of the whip, the right to assemble, and to vote. During the US Civil War, such aspirations clashed with Union officials, who regularly tried to dampen down bondpeople's expansive notion of liberty. We must "disabuse the negroes of false and exaggerated ideas of freedom," one wrote in late 1865.[56]

Among the subaltern classes of the Atlantic World, a complex of liberatory aspirations produced what has been dubbed the "enslaved Enlightenment." New World bondpeople, like all oppressed groups in

the modern world, produced their own *organic intellectuals*. Often literate, these preachers, healers, prophets, and agitators tied notions of exodus, redemption, and revolution to discourses of liberty. Their pronouncements were fertilized by the "common wind" of radical ideas—carried especially by sailors, dockworkers, skilled bondpeople, slave rebels, freed Blacks, and abolitionists of all races.[57] Participating in a dynamic oral (and partially written) culture, their sermons, speeches, and prognostications radiated across slave communities, subject to a dialogical stream of amendment and enrichment.

On a Sunday at the end of August 1789, a large group of Martinican enslaved people gathered in a valley for a mass meeting. Armed with scythes and hoes, they "refused to work, saying loudly that they were free," according to the report of the colony's governor. The bondpeople believed that the king of France had recently abolished slavery. In one letter sent to colonial officials, some of the bonded people declared, "We will die for this liberty." In a second letter, they proclaimed, "The entire nation of the black slaves united together has only one wish, one desire for independence, and all slaves with one unanimous voice articulate just one cry, the demand for a liberty they have justly won." The enslaved rebels of Martinique appear to have acted before news of the revolution in France reached the colony. In Guadeloupe, on the other hand, it was the arrival of radical French sailors that stimulated enslaved agitation for freedom. In April of 1793, hundreds of slaves on the island seized arms and killed royalist planters whom they accused of plotting against the revolution in France. When escorted into the town of Basse-Terre to explain themselves to authorities, the Black insurgents were heard shouting, "Vive la République!"[58]

The reception of French revolutionary ideals by enslaved West Indians was profoundly dialogical. The rebels of Guadeloupe not only grasped the idea of republicanism; they also extended it beyond liberal bonds—to the point where it could justify the killing of royalist planters. Moreover, bondpeople's engagement with the republican ideals of the Revolution extended beyond the French colonies. In 1795, the British commander of an expedition against rebellious slaves of Saint Lucia reported that the Blacks "are to a man attached to the French cause." He even recounted one slave rebel shouting "Vive la République!" before being executed. Just as enslaved people displayed knowledge of French events, so they exhibited considerable appreciation of English abolitionism. In November 1795, an estimated 3,000 slaves in Jamaica's Westmoreland Parish celebrated the birthday of William Wilberforce. In

so doing, they not only indicated their awareness of this British champion of abolition; they also aligned themselves with the movement to abolish slavery. However immersed they may have been in struggles for survival, these thousands of bondpeople had no difficulty laying claim to freedom.[59]

There is little doubt that the republican rhetoric of freedom was most audaciously adapted by insurgent slaves in Haiti. Interrogated some months after the 1791 outbreak of their revolution, a small group of Saint Domingue bondpeople declared "that they wanted to enjoy the liberty they are entitled to by the rights of man." Some months later, another group told a French general that they fought for "Perfect liberty."[60] Yet, however unique the outcome of the upheaval in Haiti, the adherence of its slave revolutionaries to the goal of liberty was no aberration. In addition to upheavals in Martinique, Guadeloupe, St. Lucia, and Jamaica in the name of freedom, enslaved people in Cuba were also inspired by the revolutionary ferment sweeping the Atlantic World. Within weeks of the August 1791 slave revolt in Saint Domingue, bondpeople in northern Cuba rose up. In the coming years, radicalized slaves on the island were seen wearing emblems of revolutionary France. By June 1795, one leader of another slave rebellion declared that "there were no more masters, that [they] were all free." And Cuba was not the only Spanish colony that experienced such convulsions. In the spring of 1795, armed slaves, free Blacks, and *zambos* (of mixed Indigenous and African descent) rose up in Coro, Venezuela, to establish a multiracial republic independent of Spain. In August of the same year, strikes of bondpeople in neighboring Curaçao mushroomed into an armed uprising that attacked prisons and plantations. The cry of *la liberté* animated these upheavals, taking on a deeper, more radical meaning when articulated by revolutionary slaves.[61]

Bondpeople in the United States also raised the banner of liberty. Black abolitionist Henry Highland Garnet, who had escaped bondage along with his parents, issued one of many stirring calls for a slave uprising in an 1843 speech in Buffalo. Advocating an insurrectionary general strike, Garnet declared, "No oppressed people have ever secured their liberty without resistance." Increasingly, historians are aware of the degree to which abolitionist texts, demands, and rhetoric percolated throughout enslaved communities. Perhaps nothing more symbolizes this than their enduring commitment to the figure of Toussaint Louverture, a commitment especially prominent during the Civil War. As Matthew Clavin has shown, fugitive slaves who escaped to Union lines repeatedly invoked Haiti's revolution and its preeminent leader.[62]

It is certainly true that many of the declarations of rights by enslaved people had an economic dimension. But it is an utter failure of historical imagination to claim that these were merely about the desire to "stay alive" rather than about "resisting slavery."[63] To claim rights is to assert personhood. And that in itself runs directly counter to the chattel principle. All assertions of rights against planter power carried with them the charge of the Haitian Creole (Kreyòl) expression *tou moun se moun*, or "everyone is a person." Not to see the oppositional subtext of this is to miss the heart and soul of enslaved resistance. When bonded people used the language of rights, they were doing something more than just asserting a *specific* right; they were simultaneously proclaiming their existence as rights-bearing subjects.

There is in fact an expansive dialectic inherent to the language of rights. It could be used in an apparently narrow fashion, as when a bondwoman named Mary traveled to government offices in New Amsterdam, Berbice, in 1826 to lodge a complaint—or, as she put it, "to get my right." But it could also be deployed in a politically insurgent fashion, as it was three years earlier, when an armed group of forty slave rebels, participants in a general uprising, informed the governor of Demerara that what they sought was "our rights."[64] The dynamic of struggle for rights opens toward universalization. This was especially true in moments of mass upheaval, when "enslaved insurgents heard, spoke, and ultimately transformed a Republican language of rights." The claim that enslaved Africans did not aspire to freedom (and the rights that accompany it), notes Michel-Rolph Trouillot, rests "not so much on empirical evidence as on an ontology . . . of the world and its inhabitants."[65] This is, of course, a bad ontology, one that caricatures enslaved peoples of the New World as timid, conservative beings wary of reaching for freedom. The evidence speaks profoundly to the contrary. Emancipation—and with it the ideal of freedom—comprised a horizon of hope toward which bondpeople marched.

Whoever writes about slavery writes about freedom.

CHAPTER 10

Empires of Capital, Worlds of Revolt

In my view, the most momentous thing happening in the world today is the slave movement—on the one hand in America, started by the death of [John] Brown, and in Russia on the other.

—Karl Marx, January 11, 1860

In 1850, an exiled revolutionary settled in London, having been expelled from his native Germany, and then from France, in the aftermath of the failed revolutions of 1848. Near the top of Karl Marx's agenda was acquiring a reader's pass to the British Museum. There, he intended to decipher why, when recent revolutions had erupted in continental Europe, England had been relatively quiescent, something, he believed, that had doomed the 1848 upheavals. He conjectured that England had been buoyed by a wave of global economic expansion that heralded a new epoch. The dynamics, as well as the contradictions, of this new economic conjuncture had yet to be discerned, however. So, he would need to resume his critique of political economy. And this would have to be done with fresh eyes and new sources in order to "start again from the very beginning."[1]

The notebooks Marx compiled over the next three years offer a wide-ranging, if understudied, source for the development of his mature critique of capitalism. Here he first interrogated the writings of Edward Gibbon Wakefield to assess the role of colonies in capitalism's worldwide expansion. This would lead Marx to attribute a globally disruptive power to anticolonial struggles in upending the capitalist mode of production. Slave rebellions too could be revolutionary catalysts, he reasoned. Hence his enthusiasm for the uprising led by John Brown at

Harper's Ferry in 1859—and for a subsequent rebellion by bondpeople in Missouri some months later. For the next five years, he and Friedrich Engels paid more attention to the Civil War in the United States than to any other struggle in the world. And when the International Workingmen's Association (IWA) was launched in 1864, Marx insured that support for the Union's war against slavery was a centerpiece of its activity. Although a unique position on the European left, it had deep roots. From the 1850s, many of Marx's closest German-American supporters had moved in abolitionist circles, Black and white, and many would become officers in the Union army. A fruitful convergence of Marxism and abolitionism incubated during this period, one whose lessons for the global left have yet to be adequately registered. Before exploring these issues, however, let us first map the tremendous transformations in global capitalism that Marx was studying—and the new lease they gave to Atlantic slavery.

INDUSTRIAL SLAVERY

In these studies of the early 1850s, Marx traced the dynamics of a new form of global economy organized around mechanized factories, globally integrated markets, and "free trade" imperialism. It was long held that these developments doomed Atlantic slavery.[2] Yet, rather than wane in the age of rising industrialism (1775–1850), New World slavery boomed. Equally significant, the United States emerged as the mainspring of the global plantation complex. Consider the numbers. In 1800 Brazil had held more bonded people than any other New World region. Sixty years later there were perhaps three times as many enslaved people in the United States, following a quadrupling of the slave population of the South. With millions more slaves came millions more acres of land devoted to plantation production as US slaveholders pushed into the Deep South. Elsewhere, planters moved into the interior of Jamaica and western Cuba, colonized British Guiana, and swept through south-central Brazil. Beyond this extensive growth, the New World slave system also experienced sweeping technological renovation. Struck by the scale of these transformations, a handful of historians have dubbed this period *the second slavery* to underscore the qualitative differences with the Atlantic slave system of 1550–1750. Critically, this was the most fully *capitalist* slavery the world has seen, one powerfully governed by the system's regulator, the law of value.[3] To understand this, we must map the increasing synchronization of

Atlantic slavery with the dynamics of industrial capitalism. That story begins with cotton.

. . .

"Whoever says industrial revolution says cotton," wrote Eric Hobsbawm. And whoever says cotton says slavery, he might have added. That the English factory and the Atlantic slave plantation formed a single economic nexus each did not elude Marx. As early as 1847, he wrote: "Direct slavery is the pivot of our industrialism today as much as machinery, credit, etc. Without slavery you have no cotton, without cotton you have no modern industry."[4]

Between 1785 and 1850, Britain's production of cotton cloth exploded, increasing more than fifty times over, from 40 million to in excess of 2 billion yards. Such growth was without precedent in the history of world manufacturing. Critical to it was the application of new technologies—the flying shuttle, the spinning jenny, the water frame, the spinning mule, and the power loom. But this was no case of technology driving economic change. Far from being an autonomous driver of the process, mechanization in fact *responded* to industrial growth. Between 1750 and 1770, for instance, British exports of cotton cloth multiplied ten times over, yet technological change remained piecemeal at best. As late as 1813 there were merely 2,400 power looms in England. Only after decades of growth did it become economical to introduce power-driven processes of mass production into the industry. Between 1813 and 1850, the number of power looms multiplied nearly one hundred times over (to 224,000). Henceforth, the results were astonishing. Not only did the volume of output soar; phenomenal increases occurred in the productivity of labor. Consider the most basic measure of labor's efficiency: the amount of time it takes to produce a good. Using a 100-spindle mule, a worker in Britain needed 1,000 hours in 1790 to spin 100 pounds of raw cotton. Five years later, working with a water frame, they could do it in just 300 hours. After 1825, the same amount might be spun in just 135 hours with the aid of Roberts's automated mule. By then, 100 pounds of raw cotton could be manufactured in less than one-seventh of the time it had taken just thirty-five years earlier. Cotton mill workers had, in short, become more than seven times as productive each and every hour of the workday. Herein lies the extraordinary dynamism of the Industrial Revolution. And all along the line, it was cotton that led the way. An insignificant industry in 1760, it was the economically dominant one fifty years later; by 1830

it accounted for more than one-fifth of value added in the entire British economy. By then both cotton and metalworking had become factory-based industries powered by steam engines.[5]

One effect of the enormous jump in labor productivity was a dramatic decline in costs of production. Only now did Britain abandon the tariffs that protected its cotton industry from Indian producers. Earlier, in order to insulate British firms from Indian competition, duties on cotton from India had tripled from the 1790s through to 1819. By 1830, however, British companies could at last manufacture yarn more cheaply than could producers in India. Another thirty years on, British cotton prices had dropped to one percent of their 1784 level.[6] This was the basis for England's full-fledged embrace of free trade imperialism. Lower prices due to superior technology were now leveraged into a weapon of economic warfare. Markets, it was now clear, could be invaded by metropolitan goods as well as by military forces.

SATANIC MILLS, BLOODY FIELDS, STOLEN LANDS

The revolution in cotton manufacturing would not have been possible without an astonishing increase in the supply of raw cotton. That field work kept pace with factory depended on a remarkable increase in the amount of cotton picked by enslaved people in the Caribbean and the antebellum South. Consider that over the same sixty-five-year period (1785–1850) in which British output of cotton cloth climbed fifty times over, the country's imports of raw cotton from the South grew even faster, catapulting from 11 million to 588 million pounds, an extraordinary increase that rested on slave labor. And while the US South would be the center of the New World Cotton Kingdom, it was not the whole story. From the 1760s, cotton cultivation soared in Barbados, Tobago, and the Bahamas. Saint-Domingue and Guyana too underwent major cotton booms in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, while Brazil's industry kept expanding through the first decades of the nineteenth. In the fifty years up to 1860, more than four million additional enslaved people were forced into chattel labor in the New World.[7]

But by now cotton was king, the world's most traded commodity. And while the appetite of Britain's mills for cotton was insatiable, island colonies had little more cultivable land and Brazilian plantations remained comparatively inefficient. Only the Lower South of the United States offered an apparently endless cotton frontier—premised on continuing dispossession of Indigenous peoples—along with vast and growing

reserves of bonded labor alongside planters capable of large investments.[8] In a mere eight years (1793–1801), cotton production there grew more than thirty times over, from 3,000 to 100,000 bales annually—and it just kept soaring. In Georgia, output leapt nearly sixty times over in the space of two decades (1790–1810). In Mississippi, it increased nearly forty times across a similar length of time (1837–38 to 1859–60). Later, as the cotton frontier pushed through Texas, production multiplied ten times over in the 1850s alone.[9]

Among the ironies of this period is that a revolution *against* bondage (in Saint-Domingue) fostered the extension of slavery across the Southern Cotton Kingdom. The defeat inflicted on Napoleon in Saint-Domingue (later to be Haiti) pushed the French emperor to reorganize his colonial empire. In 1803, in the Louisiana Purchase, Napoleon sold the United States 828,000 square miles of land west of the Mississippi River. Thomas Jefferson's government covered the $15 million price with loans financed in part by the British merchant bank Baring Brothers & Company.[10] For the Indigenous inhabitants of these territories, the consequences of this sale would be devastating. But for the US federal state, it provided a doubling of its territory at a rock-bottom price of four cents an acre.

Once again, an expanded settler colonization underwrote the growth of the plantation complex as the Cotton Kingdom tracked new waves of Indigenous expropriation. Cotton production, after all, required *emptied* land to which bonded labor could be applied. In the early 1770s, a combination of debt and violence coerced the Creek into ceding 2 million acres in Georgia. The Cherokee were coerced into forfeiting 17 million acres to Tennessee and Kentucky. Then in the early 1800s, the Creek were extorted of 23 million acres more, which would be claimed by Georgia and Alabama, while the Choctaw people were forced to relinquish 7½ million acres. Everywhere Indigenous peoples were removed, cotton plantations followed. And where debt did not do the trick, armed force did, as Tecumseh and the Red Stick Creeks found out when, following their defeat in 1812–13, huge swathes of land were taken from the Chickasaw, the Choctaws, and from the Creek once more. Next came Mississippi, where the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and related laws gave legal cover to yet more waves of displacement, most terribly the deportation of 60,000 Choctaw, Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Creek along the Trail of Tears to Oklahoma, where thousands perished en route. This horror overlapped with the removal of the Cherokee nation from its historic lands in Georgia. Still, capital's land

hunger was not satiated. The Seminoles too were displaced from soon-to-be cotton lands in Florida. Next, Texas was annexed for cotton capitalism in 1845, nearly doubling the size of the United States and provoking the 1846–48 war with Mexico, which led to the absorption of the Pacific southwest into the United States. By 1850, two-thirds of all US cotton was grown on land that had not belonged to the United States fifty years earlier.[11]

All these expropriated lands were quickly "improved" in classically capitalist fashion—by the sweat of Black bonded labor. Between 1820 and 1860 nearly a million people were sent from the Upper South to the Lower South of the United States to work the estates of the Cotton Kingdom. Mississippi, which produced no cotton in 1801, was cultivating ten million tons annually a mere twenty years later, and the boom was just getting started.[12] This phenomenal relocation of labor-power was joined to a Southern agricultural revolution that complemented the industrial one in Britain.

FACTORIES IN THE FIELD

The technological revolution in cotton began with the most basic biological ingredient: seeds. "The South," note two economists, "was the undisputed world leader in the creation and diffusion of superior cotton varieties. The achievements of southern cotton breeders rivaled anything accomplished by northern wheat breeders in the nineteenth century."[13] Over the decades, planters experimented with crossing seeds from India, Mexico, Central America, the Ottoman Empire, and the West Indies, in the process creating a range of strains, including Petit Gulf and One Hundred cottonseeds. The latter varieties provided for high-quality cotton that could be more readily picked by the human hand. This improvement in "pickability" was critical. Earlier quotas for enslaved pickers had often been set at 50 pounds per day; but with Petit Gulf cotton an adult field laborer was expected to gather at least four times that amount every workday. Planter account books show that average amounts of cotton picked per hand did indeed quadruple between 1800 and 1860, amounting to a full-fledged productivity revolution in cotton picking.[14]

This explosion in output per worker was not unique to cotton. The British model having been adopted, output per bonded worker effectively tripled in Cuban sugar between 1827 and 1861—from 1.08 to 3.12 tons per laborer—as sugar-masters there "realized that seconds are

bits of capital." And in Brazil, the average number of coffee bushes worked by an enslaved toiler also tripled, from roughly 1,000 to 3,000. On the most productive estates, they might work 5,000 bushes.[15]

In addition to widescale experimentation with seed biology, the cotton revolution involved improvements in soil conservation, drainage systems, and crop rotation, the latter often borrowing heavily from Indigenous practices. The same was true for rice production in South Carolina and Georgia, where better irrigation technology enabled use of drained tidal swamplands. As in England's agricultural revolution, animal power (horses, mules, and oxen) was routinely substituted for human labor. A process of inventing and improving tools and equipment proceeded in concert, involving the double-shovel plow, the side harrow, the cultivator, seed planters, and a host of soil scrapers. Then, in the 1840s and 1850s, considerably lighter steel plows and hoes replaced earlier iron versions. Alongside these improvements in basic implements appeared new mechanical devices, most famously the cotton gin. While it was not entirely his invention, Eli Whitney acquired a patent for the gin in 1794 and began manufacturing the device at a Massachusetts factory. Over the next decade a slew of modifications to the gin led to new designs and patents. As cotton was picked in vastly greater quantities, improved mechanical gins insured it could also be cleaned at immensely faster rates. By 1830 cotton gins were ubiquitous throughout the South. Gin-producing factories sprang up to meet this growing demand—in the South as well as in the Northeast.[16]

Alongside these technical innovations went the use of punching blocks, riveting hammers, and plantation presses, which allowed the packing of ever-greater quantities of cotton into a given cubic space, thus reducing shipping costs. Meanwhile, steamboats and locomotive railways accelerated shipping time. In all these ways—via seed cultivation, mechanization, and new efficiencies in packing and distribution—production time was being squeezed and with it costs per unit. Ancillary processes of mechanization developed in tandem, as planters introduced feeders, corn-shelling machines, gristmills, grinding machines, and more. By the 1850s, plantation machines were being manufactured in Southern towns like Vicksburg, Mississippi. As in Britain's Industrial Revolution, the introduction of steam power was critical to the great jump in the productive power of plantations. The 1838 US Industrial Census showed more stationary steam engines in the South (421) than in New England (317) or the Mid-Atlantic states (378). In addition, Southern steam mills were on average larger than most.[17]

Sugar, of course, experienced greater use of steam power than did any other plantation crop. And the Louisiana cane industry led the pack, with earlier and more widespread use of steam than was to be found in Cuba or Brazil. One hundred Louisiana mills were powered by steam by 1830; twenty years later, fully 900 plantations were operating with steam power. Lagging behind, Louisiana's competitors determined to catch up. In Cuba, only 25 mills used steam in 1827. But the number leapt to 286 two decades later, and then to 944 by the time of the outbreak of the Civil War in the United States. Brazil never experienced mechanization in sugar to the same degree. As late as 1855, fewer than one in five Brazilian mills deployed steam engines, but even there the percentage exceeded 50 percent by 1874.[18]

The cumulative effect of these economic developments was a transformation of the architecture and technology of the plantation. As one historian observes of the southern United States:

> On large plantations where steam-power was employed, factorylike structures with towering chimneys of brick or sheet iron dominated the skyline. These buildings each housed several gin stands, a cotton press, a grist and flour mill, a saw mill, and probably lathes, circular saws, and other woodworking machines, all of which were propelled by means of belting and shafting by a steam engine located in an adjacent building.[19]

This agro-industrial complex in cotton—the outcome of a dramatic convergence of biological and agricultural innovation, mechanization, and labor speedup—represented a new phase in the development of planter capitalism. W. E. B. Du Bois remarked that by 1820 Southern slavery had become "an industrial system,"[20] and this was true of most Caribbean slave colonies as well. Accelerating this new phase of industrial slavery was British capitalism's increasing shift toward a "free trade" empire—and the weaponization of global price competition that went with it.

FREE TRADE IMPERIALISM AND GLOBAL PRICE COMPETITION

Accompanying the Industrial Revolution was a revolution in transport. Its ultimate purpose was to raise profits by accelerating the circulation of commodities. After all, if goods get to buyers more quickly, money returns to the capitalist sooner, everything else being equal. Such reductions in the *turnover time* of capital enable a given sum of money to

initiate more cycles of production and exchange per year. For this reason, as Marx wrote, not only does capital undertake to "conquer the whole world for its market," it also strives "to annihilate this space with time, i.e. to reduce to a minimum the time spent in motion from one place to another."[21] Practically, this meant speeding up the transit of commodities across land and water.

Here, a series of infrastructures and technologies of transportation were vital: canals; the steamboat and the steamship; larger and faster sailing clippers; the telegraph; improved roads; and the railway. By the 1810s, up and down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, steamboats transported people and goods, especially cotton, at unprecedented velocities. "Distance is no longer thought of in this region," exulted one observer of the Mississippi, "it is almost annihilated by steam!" As steamships compressed travel times across the world's oceans and seas, international shipping rates plummeted, a process that embraced Afro-Asia as well as the Atlantic World. The results were phenomenal. In 1800, long-range shipment of goods amounted to something on the order of one million tons globally. Forty years later, the number had reached 20 million tons worldwide. It would then double in the next forty years.[22]

What steam-powered travel did on water, the railroad accomplished on land. The railway explosion exemplified the space-time compression of the age. The first line was completed in 1825 with the modest aim of moving coal from Durham to the English coast. Five years later the first passenger rail line was operating between London and Manchester. Lines were opened in the United States in 1827, France in 1828, Belgium and Germany in 1835, and Russia two years after that. By 1840, there were 4,500 miles of railroads in the world. A decade later total mileage had jumped to 23,500. By 1869, there would be more than 56,000 miles of track in the United States alone. New World plantation societies were swept up in this boom. In 1833, the new 136-mile South Carolina Canal and Railroad line was the longest railway line in the world under a single management. Meanwhile, 7,500 miles of track, perhaps considerably more, were constructed across the South during the 1850s, much of it built by bonded labor. Planters in Cuba got into the act too, constructing the most sophisticated rail network in Latin America. Britain's white settler colonies like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand were soon leaders in railroad construction. Not only did the thousands of miles of track crisscrossing settler colonies bring agricultural commodities to port cities where they could be loaded onto steamships. Railways also served as weapons of settler colonialism, cut-

ting through Indigenous communities and moving troops to suppress their resistance. In the US West, meanwhile, the Pacific Railroad Act alone transferred nearly two million acres of Indigenous lands to private railway companies.[23]

Railways, steamboats and steamships, canals, and the telegraph conquered space, linked markets, and sped up the circulation of goods and laborers. In so doing, they also integrated commodity and capital markets as never before, making possible a truly global price system. Traditionally, difficulties of transportation had obstructed the emergence of unitary world prices. International commodity prices were thus highly segmented and regionalized. Before the 1800s, for instance, worldwide price differentials for a single good, such as wheat or pig iron, could be as large as 100 percent (meaning that the price of a good in one area might be twice as high in another). By the nineteenth century these differentials were collapsing under the impact of the transportation revolution. As ever more commodities flowed between regions at unprecedented speeds, world prices converged—and at lower levels as the Industrial Revolution drove up labor productivity.[24] The moment of free trade imperialism had arrived.

In the late eighteenth century, Britain carried through trade liberalization agreements with the United States and France. Soon the 1801 Act of Union with Ireland forced that historic colony into an unrestricted market with its oppressor. Agreements were concluded with Brazil in 1810, 1815, and 1817. Backed by military pressure, they dismantled that empire's colonial monopolies on trade, opening its territories to British goods. Then in 1813 the Charter Act broke the monopoly of the East India Company over India's external trade. Cuba soon passed free trade laws with Britain, codifying practices established since the latter's occupation of Havana in 1762. By this time, the cotton barons of the South had largely embraced free trade as well, often challenging protectionist pressures emanating from the US Northeast.[25] Step by step, liberalization of trade had crystallized into imperial policy.

To be sure, unfettered market competition was only part of the story. Military force was still used to pry open markets. Indeed, "free trade" was often imposed via military steamboats, as in Britain's Opium War with China (1839–42), its conquest of Muhammed Ali's regime in Egypt during the same years (which destroyed that state's cotton industry), or in US Commodore Perry's opening of Japan's market by way of gunboats in 1853. Throughout this era, Britain also established military bases on the Cape of Good Hope, Vancouver Island, Malta, Hong

Kong, Alexandria, Gibraltar, Singapore, and other locations. Having secured world military and naval dominance, it could now impose a regime of "free trade" on its main trading partners.[26] But once forced open, Britain, followed at some distance by other European powers and the United States, could often expect to dominate markets by means of price competition.

This is the context in which, during the 1830s, the British also clamped down on the slave trade. Having abolished its own business in enslaved Africans in 1807, it now treated that commerce as an unfair trade advantage for others. To be sure, the empire was reacting to enslaved resistance and the growth of abolitionism. But the pressure it applied to its rivals derived largely from economic motives, not moral ones. When the Brazilian government proved reticent about ending its trade in bonded people, to which it had earlier agreed, British warships forced a halt.

Eventually, Britain elected to practice at home the trade doctrines it was forcing upon the rest of the world. In 1846, it at last eliminated the Corn Laws, which had buttressed the interests of landlords and capitalist farmers by means of protective tariffs. This too symbolized the triumph of industrial over agrarian capitalists. Then in 1849, the British Parliament repealed the Navigation Acts, by which Britain had required its colonies to use British ships in foreign trade. But economic liberalization signaled no decline in colonial conquest. Instead, colonialism was bound ever more closely to market integration, as in the extended conquest of India. No sooner were the Corn Laws abolished at home in 1846 than the Punjab was annexed by Britain (1849), followed by Berar and Nagpur (1853), and Oudh (1856).[27]

As more regions of the world were integrated into the imperial economy, new centers of raw materials production emerged in rice, hemp, sugar, coffee, and more. In the aftermath of the revolution in Saint Domingue, planters in Cuba and Louisiana nabbed large shares of the sugar market and planters in both Trinidad and British Guiana also got into the act. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius (off the east coast of Africa) would become Britain's primary sugar producer while southern Africa, Australia, Hawaii, and Southeast Asia would also become significant players in the world sugar market. Meanwhile, the development of the French sugar beet industry established a major new source. Cotton production too would migrate to new regions from India to Egypt.[28] The world economy was more global than ever before. And linking all these sites of production and

exchange into an ever-more unified system was a new architecture of global finance.

EMPIRE, FINANCE, AND THE WORLD LAW OF VALUE

The empire of free trade found its coordinating center in the London banking system, the place where multinational loans were settled and where world payments were made. Every capitalist system of production and exchange relies upon extensive networks of credit and finance, all governed by generally accepted means of exchange and payment. This requires a hierarchy of monies ranging from simple promissory notes (IOUs) all the way to the world's dominant currency (often tied to precious metal). Ultimately, the "lowest," or most local and limited, forms of payment must be convertible into the "highest," the most universally accepted, such as precious metals or the world's dominant currency. In the nineteenth century, *world money*, the most universal means of exchange, was incarnated in the British pound sterling, which was anchored to gold. This made London the financial center of Atlantic slavery as well. The business of planters and their financial agents throughout the British West Indies and the US South was ultimately conducted on the city's credit markets.

Running across the antebellum South, Barbados, and Jamaica, among other sites, stretched a chain of credit transactions governed by London banking houses, often merchant bankers such as the Barings. And at the end of this chain was the British pound, with which the plethora of credit monies used by planters and merchants—promissory notes, loans backed by mortgages, bills of exchange, and more—had to be convertible. When North American traders bought coffee from merchants in Brazil, for instance, they provided bills of exchange issued on London banks or trading houses. All other means of payment had to find their rates of exchange with the pound and gold.[29] In addition, throughout the pre–Civil War decades, much of the capital borrowed to sustain US investment—in factories, farms, cotton plantations, mills, canals, railways, and more—was raised in Britain. In 1856, 40 percent of all state bonds (sold to raise capital for roads, railways, canals, and more) came from foreign buyers.[30] These loans too had ultimately to be repaid in the reigning world money of the time, the British pound.

The hierarchy of world money is the enforcement mechanism for the law of value. It obliges units of capital to produce according to socially necessary labor time or to perish. Farsighted planters intimated the

weight of this. One slaveowner told the State Agricultural Society of South Carolina in 1846 that "the planter of cotton, is forced to sell his product at a price regulated by silver and gold."[31] To be *forced* to sell in gold or silver prices is to experience market compulsion; it is to feel the social imperative of the law of value governing commodity production.

This compulsion was often exercised by means of *credit market discipline*.[32] New World slaveowners were as deeply integrated into global circuits of credit and finance as any other major market actors. Like capitalists in other sectors, planters regularly borrowed to finance investments in land, tools and equipment, building supplies, and raw materials. To that list, they added slaves. In addition, it was common for middling and smaller planters to receive credit from sugar, tobacco, or cotton merchants, in order to buy annual supplies of seed, slave clothing, foodstuffs, and new tools with which to launch a production cycle. Touring the Deep South in the 1850s, one commentator wrote of planters there, "Not one in fifteen, I am assured, is free of debt."[33] This had little to do with slaveowners being profligates; it was a simple function of the pressures of competition. In order to hold their own in capitalist markets, planters were compelled to expand and improve their means of production. This is why the average size of plantations and their workforces increased persistently over time. As a detailed study of South Carolina demonstrated, planter capital—measured by holdings of livestock, manufactured goods, tools, capital goods, crops, and other plantation commodities—more than doubled between 1722 and 1762.[34] New World planters took loans in order to avoid falling behind in a competitive race. These loans would then be discharged, in principle at least, when the sales of plantation commodities provided cash for repayment. "The harvest of one year," noted one commentator "is as it were mortgaged for the expenses of the next."[35]

On top of this, the marketing of New World crops like cotton, tobacco, and sugar was rarely undertaken by planters themselves, who frequently lacked the resources to ship their goods to local ports like Charleston, Savannah, and New Orleans, where they would often be shipped again to Liverpool or London. One London merchant estimated before a parliamentary committee in 1833 that three-quarters of the cotton sent to Liverpool was consigned to the market by merchants rather than planters.[36] These might be the same merchants (or "factors") with whom planters had incurred debts. Or they could be larger commercial agents who had purchased from local agents. Either way, credit regulated all stages of the cotton cycle, from production to trans-

portation to sale in foreign markets. And planters knew as much. Another speaker before the State Agricultural Society of South Carolina explained, "Negroes are purchased on credit . . . As cotton is the only crop that will command money, and as money is the most pressing want of a man in debt, every thing is directed toward that object."[37] And for planter capitalists, this meant that everything pivoted on the labor and bodies of bonded workers.

In fact, longer-term loans for plantation investments were often collateralized against bondpeople themselves, who became the security for debts.[38] Even when not formally collateralized in this way, planter loans effectively remained debts drawn on slave bodies—or the labor therefrom. Isaac Mason intuited as much when he wrote of his time as a slave, "I was only the property of another, working to pay the debt of another, who I suppose thought he ought to receive interest on his bill." A significant amount of the surplus value produced by enslaved people was thus captured as interest on loans. This is why rich slaveholders often added credit provision to their business operations. The Lascelles family, ultra-wealthy planters with estates in Barbados and Jamaica, became major West Indian financiers, for instance, lending to slaveowners and slave traders alike. Across Louisiana, gentry planters regularly served as accommodation endorsers, guaranteeing loans (as cosigners) for a fee. As the financial system became more complex during the second slavery, many wealthy planters throughout the antebellum South diversified their portfolios by investing in both factorage firms (which provided financial loans) and chartered banks.[39]

Even when the factors who provided loans to planters were based in local commercial centers—like Atlanta, Columbia, Memphis, or Mobile—they were often agents of (or partners with) merchants and banks in New Orleans, New York, and Liverpool. A merchant who bought cotton in Nashville or New Orleans frequently sold it in Liverpool. The loans provided by a Savannah or Richmond factor connected the planter to networks of world finance centered on the Bank of England. This is why "the power behind King Cotton's rickety throne was located in New York and Liverpool rather than in New Orleans, Mobile, Savannah, and Charleston."[40] And London was the nerve center of the system, the place where the chains of Atlantic finance converged.

Since debts were regularly collateralized against slaves and land, failure to repay risked losing everything. The obligation to repay loans *compelled* ongoing technological change to keep up with improving efficiencies of production (ever lower socially necessary labor times).

One analyst of the sugar economy writes, "The imperatives of the market and the demand for surplus labor were imposed upon . . . material-technical conditions of sugar production."[41] The same held in cotton. The constant striving across the Cotton Kingdom to improve soils and seeds, to upgrade tools and implements, to introduce machines and steam power, to experiment with new managerial techniques—all of this was about matching socially necessary labor times. Plantation slavery now inhabited a market environment in which survival demanded the application of agro-industrial methods that more efficiently exploited labor, rather than the leveraging of world price differentials. The core dynamic of the second slavery was the subordination of plantation production to the imperatives of an industrial capitalism driven at its centers by wage labor. As one historian of the nineteenth-century Cuban sugar plantation noted, not only was the planter "a man of bourgeois consciousness," equally critical, "his survival and success were only possible by constant renovation of the means of production." The nineteenth-century capitalist world economy thus involved "a contradictory unity" of waged and bonded labor all "governed by value relations." In economic terms, industrial slavery was, as Philip McMichael put it, coterminous with the "global wage relation."[42]

"UNMODERN" SLAVERY AND THE GOTHIC SOUTH

Notwithstanding the overwhelming evidence that New World slaveholders were calculating, profit-maximizing actors in a system of competitive accumulation, a variety of commentators persist in describing the plantation system as *premodern*. Having largely abandoned the idea of slaveholders as profligate spenders devoted to luxury consumption rather than market production, these commentators rest their case on the failure of Southern planters and merchants to build a dynamic industrial economy. Scott P. Marler, for instance, accepts that these groups were profit-oriented, but argues that they behaved in a precapitalist manner by prioritizing production "geared toward commodities of practically no local utility." Focusing instead on long-distance trade, the actions of Southern elites ostensibly generated "detrimental regional economic effects," at the forefront of which was a low level of industrial development.[43]

Implicit in this interpretation are the dubious assumptions of liberal modernization theory, which presumes that modern capitalism drives toward balanced and diversified development. This, of course, corresponds with the view of former US national security advisor W. W. Ros-

tow in his *Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (1960), the bible of modernization theorists. Rather than a system of exploitation, obscene social inequality, underdevelopment of peripheral economies, and widespread environmental devastation, capitalism in the modernizers' perspective is energetic, innovative, enlightened, rational, and industrial. As critics of many stripes observed, the modernization approach proposes a vulgar teleology in which human progress beneficently culminates in Western capitalism. Capitalists appear as vigorous modernizers promoting the laudable goal of a diversified economy that fosters general well-being.[44]

Marler weds these assumptions to a Weberian psychologism in which it is the subjective dispositions of Southern merchants and planters that account for their precapitalist behavior. These groups are said to have suffered from "limited horizons," as well as "lack of thrift" joined to "conservative investment mentalities." Said to be "stubbornly rural" and guilty of "ingrained resistance to change," Southern elites were also ostensibly "lethargic" and "passive."[45] Presumed throughout is that truly modern capitalists are the opposite of all these things: energetic rather than lethargic; active not passive; decidedly urban rather than stubbornly rural; welcoming of change instead of resistant to it; bearers of dynamic rather than conservative investment mentalities.

Such arguments rehearse timeworn tropes about the Gothic South. In a classic case of displacement onto abject others, liberalism constructed the South as a repository of everything it ostensibly is not: lazy, narcissistic, violent, backward, licentious, exploitative, warlike, racist, cruel, and irrational. Having projected brutality onto the archaic South, capitalist modernity (represented by the North) is thereby figured as a sanctum of peace, prosperity, humanity, and rationality. As one critic points out, "These formulations disavowed both the contemporaneity of the South with the larger nation and the presence of apartheid in other areas of the country."[46] To be sure, a Marxist critique does not deny the barbaric qualities of Southern society—it simply insists that they were general. It thereby highlights the *modernity* of these supposed archaisms.

In contrast to exceptionalist analyses, critical political economy understands the unity of capitalist development and social regress, of modernity and the Gothic. It reminds us that the purpose of capital (its telos) is accumulation by way of the production of surplus value. General economic and social development is not the raison d'être of capitalists. Capital's drive is to maximize private profit, not public welfare. It obeys a market rationality (and social irrationality) defined by cost minimization

and profit maximization. Seen in these terms, it is hard to disagree with the view of one economic historian that "it was not slavery that inhibited the development of manufacturing in the ante-bellum period so much as the capitalistic tendency of southern planters to focus on their most rational, profit-maximizing course, cotton monoculture." That this monoculture did not lead to economic diversification is irrelevant from the standpoint of private capitalists. Capital migrates to where profits are to be made. Slaveowners in the Caribbean and the US South therefore gravitated to the "high, reliable, and steady rates of return in agriculture."[47]

Moreover, the plantation complex was a decidedly modern formation. The production of sugar, as we have seen, was a highly mechanized process. And at least from the invention of the cotton gin in the 1790s, cotton production was ever more so. Beyond that, tobacco factories emerged as early as the 1730s in Virginia, forerunners of Southern industrial development in rope making, textiles, iron making, and even production of agricultural machinery. As late as 1860, one-fifth of all US manufacturing capacity (and one-quarter of its textile capacity) was located in the South. Adopting a global perspective, Walter Licht points out that if we treat the antebellum slave South as a single independent entity, it would have "ranked in the top five or six of industrial nations, and not just in textiles, but iron-making, mining, milling of grains and timbers, sugar refining, and leather tanning as well." In the 1790s, a Southern city like Charleston had workshops of equal size to those of a similar provincial town in Britain. It is true that a divergence began in the following century. Nevertheless, the South was among the world leaders in railway construction in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, and in 1838 Louisiana led all US states in the industrial application of steam power.[48]

Although the US South developed on agricultural foundations, this did not prevent a significant degree of manufacturing development any more than it did for the likes of Canada or New Zealand. And the growth of slavery *on its own* seems not to have retarded industrial growth. After all, the US South after 1800 had more enslaved people, both absolutely and relatively, than did Brazil. Yet, the South moved considerably ahead of the latter in industrial development, the use of agricultural technology, and the transportation revolution.[49] We are back, therefore, to the insight that Stuart Hall situated at the center of C.L.R. James's analysis: "slavery existed as a sub-economic system *within* the larger system of world capitalism . . . The plantation in the

Caribbean was at the advanced form of modern capitalism."[50] The Gothic inhabited the modern.

REVOLUTIONARY ABOLITION

Britain abolished chattel slavery in 1833. Three decades later, the defeat of the Confederacy in 1865 destroyed chattel bondage in the United States. Under British pressure, Cuba finally relented in 1886; Brazil followed two years later. Atlantic slavery had disintegrated. Too often, this is considered an inevitable sequence of events, as if the world inexorably conformed to the ostensibly capitalist principle of free labor. This, however, is to entirely misrepresent the real historical process. In fact, the first fifty years of England's Industrial Revolution actually stimulated the *growth* of chattel bondage, not its decline. No inescapable logic of capitalist development squashed slavery; only sustained revolts of enslaved people did that.

Between 1797—the midpoint of the slave revolution in Saint Domingue—and 1807, the British Empire momentously increased the number of its slave colonies, coming to rule more bonded people than ever before. Seizing Trinidad from the Spanish, Martinique from the French, and Guiana from the Dutch, Britain also reconquered Demerara, Tobago, and St. Lucia. As these slave colonies became more important to the empire's trade, not less, Britain deepened its involvement in the buying and selling of captive Africans.[51] Just as the Cotton Kingdom in the US South was undergoing enormous growth, Britain doubled down on its investment in slavery. Only an explosive wave of mass strikes by enslaved people would break the pattern.

We have seen that the mass strike by enslaved people came into its own as a weapon of struggle in British colonies from 1816. Nanny Grigg's call that year to seize freedom by halting plantation production inspired Bussa's Revolt in Barbados. The formidable uprising of more than 10,000 bondpeople in Demerara seven years later began with deliberate slowdowns in the fields, persistent lateness to work, and increased absenteeism—all steps on the road to insurrection.[52] But nowhere was the mass walkout more fundamental to rebel strategy than in the Jamaican uprising of 1831–32, where enslaved Baptist preacher Samuel Sharpe advocated the general strike as an alternative to armed revolt. "He said we must all agree to set down after Xmas," Joseph Martin recalled of Sharpe. Describing a clandestine meeting before the revolt, another insurgent explained that "the whole party bound themselves by oath not

to work after Christmas as slaves." Appearing before a committee of inquiry, Sir Willoughby Cotton told the commissioners, "The only plan I can perceive was a simultaneous rising to resist working if they were not declared free at Christmas."[53] The Jamaican strike of 1831–32, which saw 30,000 bondpeople down tools and leave the fields, soon escalated into armed resistance and the burning of plantations. And while colonial troops prevailed in the short run, the uprising dramatically hurried the end of slavery in the British Empire.[54]

These mass upheavals of bondpeople preceded the formation of Marxism as a revolutionary movement. The general strike of the slaves in the United States did not. And in the interaction of Marxists with that mass insurgency we encounter a laboratory of revolutionary multiracial working-class abolitionism, one whose promise has yet to be realized.

ABOLITIONIST MARXISM AND THE GENERAL STRIKE OF THE SLAVES

Events over there are such as to transform the world.
—Karl Marx (1862)[55]

It has rightly been observed that "it was the U.S. Civil War that brought Marx back into active politics."[56] Having for more than a decade rebuffed invitations to small group activities, Marx now reentered the political arena convinced that "the slave movement" in the United States, and with it the abolition of slavery, would "transform the world." By the mid-1850s, Marx saw the capitalist world economy as a complex totality in which differentiated forms of commodity-producing labor linked colonies, peripheries, and core regions. Rather than a local conflict, the Civil War in the United States loomed as a truly world-historic event, one that required a mass internationalist working-class response.

What most distinguished Marx's approach toward the US conflict was its revolutionary abolitionism, very much a minority position in the European labor and socialist movements at the time. From the outset, Marx advocated "a slave revolution" as the key to Northern victory. This meant foregrounding one "decisive slogan—*emancipation of the slaves*." While Abraham Lincoln indulged in half-measures, Marx stridently urged "a revolutionary turn" in Union strategy. He delighted when enslaved people themselves forced the issue. "The slavery question is being solved in practice," he exulted, in large measure by the tens of thousands of slaves who "have run away." Further emphasizing emancipation from below, Marx agitated for self-liberated bondpeople

to be "militarily organized and put into the field against the South."[57] And this was no mere counsel from the sidelines. Many of Marx's US supporters played decisive roles as abolitionist officers in the Union Army. And Marx himself worked flat out to win the working-class movement in Britain to the cause of the North, in opposition to the government's inclination to favor the Confederacy. Indeed, Henry Adams, son of a US diplomat, considered Marx to have been "the guiding hand" that organized the pivotal mass meeting of trade unionists at London's St. James Hall in March 1863, when thousands of working-class activists pledged their support for the Union.[58]

Marx's closest comrades in the United States, many of them veterans of the failed German revolution of 1848, undertook distinguished military service for the Union. Especially significant roles were played by Joseph Weydemeyer, August Willich, Robert Rosa, and Fritz Jacobi. In fact, Willich, who had fought alongside Marx and Engels in 1848–49, attained the rank of major-general, "the only communist to have ever been so honored in the history of the U.S. military." Weydemeyer, about whom we shall have more to say, rose to the rank of colonel. Behind these members of "the Marx party" were scores of others. In fact, the New York Communist Club, the most Marxist organization in the United States—and the only labor or socialist organization that offered Blacks equal membership—did not meet for the duration of the Civil War, as "most of its members had joined the Union Army." In the run-up to the war, members of the Marx party and other radicals played critical roles in rallying working-class support for Lincoln's election in cities like Chicago, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Baltimore, along with New York. A parallel part was played, first in San Antonio and then in Boston, by the indefatigable Adolf Douai, another Red '48er from Germany, who would collaborate with Weydemeyer, becoming perhaps "the most prolific popularizer of Marxism in the United States."[59] All these individuals participated in radical networks that won tens of thousands of US workers to the cause of abolition. And this was no newfound conviction on their part. For at least a decade prior to the Civil War, overlapping circles of Marxists and radical abolitionists, many of them assisting armed escapes from slavery, were often indistinguishable.

A multiracial abolitionist left first emerged in the 1830s in the United States, congealing into a consequential force around the time of the 1848 revolutions in Europe. Throughout the 1840s, American abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips had built alliances with Chartist radicals in the British working-class movement, just

as left-wing labor organizers in the United States were embracing the cause of abolition. A May Day 1848 rally in Cincinnati, almost certainly multiracial in character, heard socialist organizer John Allen proclaim, "The time has come when the laborers of the North must make common cause with the laborers of the South; and the prejudices of color be done away with." The same year saw Black abolitionist Henry Highland Garnet republish David Walker's incendiary tract *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World,* a text soon reprinted by John Brown. Black and white plebeian abolitionists, frequently armed, were by this time regularly assisting bondpeople's flights to freedom via the Underground Railroad. Many were active in vigilance committees that aided armed escapes from Southern slavery, and which provided funds, weapons, and personnel for armed struggle against proslavery forces in Kansas in the 1850s. Even in the Texas of the 1850s, Douai advocated a movement that would arm fugitive slaves in their fight for self-liberation. After leaving Texas, he praised the "revolutionary talent" of African Americans and speculated that "twenty thousand insurgent negroes" could "crush the entire southern nobility." When civil war came, abolitionism, socialism, and labor activism, occasionally informed by feminist commitments, had already converged in a militant left preparing for armed resistance.[60]

The early years of this convergence created the context for Frederick Douglass's 1849 proposal for a "Union of the Oppressed for the sake of Freedom." By the early 1850s, radical and abolitionist circles were being fertilized by left-wing refugees from the failed German Revolution of 1848–49 along with English and Irish emigrants from the Chartist movement. Key organizers within this abolitionist left also embraced the right of Indigenous resistance, often in concert with anti-imperialist opposition to the 1846–48 US war with Mexico. Many joined the Radical Abolitionist Party in 1855 only to unite a few years later in the more significant International Association, which convened demonstrations of tens of thousands in New York, where members of the Communist Club exercised considerable influence. The revolutionary imaginations of many of these radicals were uplifted by anticolonial revolts in China and India in the 1850s. Increasingly, these circles envisioned a war against slavery in the United States as part of an international revolution against autocracy and exploitation. As Mark Lause has shown, this is the insurgent milieu that politically shaped John Brown: internationalist, abolitionist, prolabor, socialist, with openings toward feminism. Rather than a marginal eccentric, "in reality, Brown

was the product of a long and self-conscious radical continuity." By the end of the Civil War and the early years of Reconstruction, many of these abolitionist-socialists regrouped in the US sections of the International Workingmen's Association (IWA), whose greatest theoretical influence was Karl Marx.[61] Let us take two key radicals of the period to illustrate the point: Joseph Weydemeyer and Richard C. Hinton.

Born in 1818, as was Marx, Joseph Weydemeyer came around circles in Cologne associated with Marx's democratic paper, the *Rheinische Zeitung*, in 1842. Two years later he met Marx in person and began publishing the latter's work in his own magazine. By 1847, Weydemeyer was a leading organizer with the Communist League in Germany. A crucial member of the Marx party during the revolution of 1848–49 and after, he was forced underground as a result of the counterrevolution, eventually emigrating to the United States in 1851 to avoid arrest. There he immediately threw himself into labor and communist writing and organizing, operating as "the de facto head of the Marx party in the United States." Beginning with the building of Marxist circles, Weydemeyer plunged into large-scale work during a New York strike wave in 1853, helping to form the American Workers League (AWL). The protests against the Kansas-Nebraska Bill in 1854, which would have allowed slavery in territories west of Missouri, next launched Weydemeyer into abolitionist activism, where he played a major role in cementing German-American opposition (and that of the AWL) to the slavocracy. This soon led to a full-fledged involvement of German-born radicals, particularly the New York Communist Club, alongside abolitionists and others in the International Association. By this time, Weydemeyer and Marx were once again in regular contact, the latter encouraging his friend's call for radicals to support (and exert abolitionist pressure on) Lincoln's presidential campaign.[62]

As of the late 1850s, Marxists and radical abolitionists in the United States often spoke in an indivisible voice, uniting in profound solidarity in memory of John Brown. A mass meeting in Cincinnati shortly after Brown's December 1859 execution is exemplary. Arriving at the venue, participants found that "the main floor and galleries were packed . . . Some two-thirds of those present were German, most of the rest were black." Indeed, a delegation of African Americans that appeared at the commencement of the meeting was greeted with a great outburst of cheers. The speakers' platform, meanwhile, "was draped in the black crepe of mourning and bore the words, 'In Memory of John Brown.'" Black abolitionist Peter H. Clark spoke, as did Weydemeyer's associate

August Willich, another member of the Marx party, on behalf of the Workers Union. Following the event, this German American communist, known as the "Reddest of the Red," led a torchlight parade through the streets in a stirring tribute to Brown. But before doing so, Willich was greeted by "rapturous applause" when he called on the audience to "whet their sabers and nerve their arms for the day of retribution."[63] This abolitionist Marxism would soon have the opportunity to do just that in the Civil War. Once again, Weydemeyer, Willich, and others of the Marx party were in the forefront.

Judging that the border states would be critical to the war, Weydemeyer traveled with the abolitionist General John C. Frémont to St. Louis, where he participated valiantly in the defense of that city against Confederate forces. After Lincoln removed Frémont from his command for proclaiming the liberty of all Missouri slaves, Weydemeyer continued to serve, leading decisive battles against Confederate guerillas and earning promotion to lieutenant-colonel. Resigning his command after 1862, he then rallied Missouri Radical Republicans to press for abolition. Concerned about Confederate advances in Missouri, he rejoined the Union Army at the end of the summer of 1864, becoming colonel of the 41st Infantry Missouri Volunteers. At war's end, Weydemeyer was elected County Auditor in St. Louis as part of a Radical Republican campaign. He continued to agitate for Black voting rights, while assisting the formation of the National Labor Union and the launch of the Eight Hours campaign, before dying of cholera in August 1866. His son Otto, who was active with the IWA, undertook the first English translation of volume one of *Capital*. I should also note here the service of Franz Sigel, associate of Engels, who became a general in the Union Army, and that of Heinrich Börnstein, another fellow traveler of the Marx party, who commanded Union troops in the Little Dixie region of Missouri, where in 1861 former slaves were issued rifles and uniforms in defiance of Lincoln's policy.[64]

If Joseph Weydemeyer demonstrates the full-fledged embrace of revolutionary abolitionism by Marxists in the United States, Richard J. Hinton highlights the transition of an associate of John Brown toward the Marxist left. The son of an English stonecutter, Hinton apprenticed in that trade and enlisted in the ranks of "physical force" Chartists, the most radical wing of the British labor movement. He had just entered his twenties when he arrived in the United States in 1851 and was soon riding with John Brown's crew in Kansas as they clashed with proslavery settlers. A self-styled military strategist, Hinton sought out allies

among Indigenous people and Black Maroons for a full-fledged war against the slaveholders. When Brown preempted this by launching his attack on Harpers Ferry, Hinton then raised money and men in hopes of rescuing the imprisoned insurgents. Hinton's triracial alliance against slavery reemerged during the Civil War, when he collaborated with Maroons and Seminoles in opposition to the Confederacy. Shortly thereafter he led Black troops in battle as captain of the First Kansas Colored Infantry Regiment. Interacting with German radicals across these years, it was unsurprising when he joined the IWA after the war, corresponding with Marx and other members of the General Council. This was a short-lived membership, however. In later years, the sharp edge of his radicalism was dulled, and he gravitated to a more reformist laborism.[65] Nevertheless, from the middle of the 1850s through the defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871, the synthesis of Marxism and revolutionary abolitionism raised each current to higher levels.

We can see the imprint of this synthesis even in key parts of the first volume of Marx's *Capital*, completed shortly after the defeat of the slavocracy. In the crucial chapter on "The Working Day," Marx celebrates the destruction of racial slavery as a liberating moment for the entire working class:

> In the United States of America, every independent workers' movement was paralyzed so long as slavery disfigured a part of the republic. Labour in the white skin cannot emancipate itself where it is branded in a black skin. However, a new life arose immediately from the death of slavery. The first fruit of the American Civil War was the eight hours agitation.[66]

Marx was not wrong to see "a new life" for US labor arising "from the death of slavery." As David Roediger perceptively notes, this was a moment of Jubilee inspired by the self-emancipation of bondpeople, which galvanized a great wave of insurgence and solidarity. Black and white abolitionists, labor radicals, Marxists, feminists, and land reformers converged in expectations that *universal* emancipation had commenced. And in the great surge of subaltern struggle after the Civil War, "popular working class consciousness . . . saw the liberation of Black slaves as a *model*." Not only was the world to be remade anew—it was to be reshaped in the very ways in which bondpeople had broken their own chains: self-mobilization from below. This was, as Roediger further notes, a moment of *revolutionary time*, where the dull tempos of everyday life are displaced by new rhythms, by ruptures and explosions that prefigure possibilities for ending all oppression.[67]

Too often, the mass struggles of this period did not sufficiently fuse, failing to combine in a multiracial rebellion linking insurgencies across North and South. In the end, under the pressure of violent attack by counterrevolutionary forces, older divisions reasserted themselves, undermining emergent solidarities. But in the moment, the upsurges were truly inspirational. By June of 1866, a bold campaign by Black laundry women in Jackson, Mississippi, had mushroomed into a major strike. Over the next few years, African American workers in Washington lumber yards and Richmond tobacco factories, on levees in Mobile and Memphis, and on docks in New Orleans, Savannah, Galveston, and Charleston all organized strikes. And this is to say nothing of the countless agricultural strikes across the South, as freedpeople contested work hours, conditions, and pay. In Colleton County, South Carolina, freedpeople were said to be practicing "a sort of 'communism'" when they purchased estates collectively and governed them by means of democratic elections. Crisscrossing all these movements was concerted Black organizing for land, the vote, labor rights, and armed self-defense against racist terror.[68]

This was the context in which the Eight Hours movement caught fire. Beginning before the Civil War had concluded, Eight Hour leagues were often led by determined abolitionists, Weydemeyer among them. Seeing the rights of labor as the next front for freedom, radicals fought to build an interracial movement for reduced hours in cities from Boston to New Orleans. In New York City, the leadership of the movement was completely interconnected with the Marxists of the International Workingmen's Association. Indeed, long-time abolitionist Wendell Phillips came out strongly in support of the campaign, announcing that labor's rights comprised "the next great question" as he too moved into the orbit of the IWA. So politically significant was the voice of radical labor in the North at this point that Connecticut, Wisconsin, New York, Missouri, Illinois, and California all passed eight-hours bills within two years of the Civil War's end. As employers refused to abide the new law, strikes and demonstrations rocked Chicago on May Day 1867.[69]

Perhaps no individual more clearly embodied the convergence of abolitionism and labor radicalism at this time than Ira Steward, the key leader of the Eight Hour Leagues. Steward was widely reputed to have joined John Brown in armed struggle against proslavery forces in Kansas in the 1850s. Before the Civil War was over, he was a prominent Boston labor leader and a preeminent theorist and organizer for the Eight Hour Leagues. In his analysis of capital's exploitation of the working class, Steward utilized a labor theory of value; by the early

1870s he was collaborating closely with the Marxist leaders of the IWA. Seeing exploitation of labor as systemic to capitalism, he argued that the freedom struggles of the Civil War were as yet unfinished. "Something of freedom is yet to come," he declared.[70]

This relationship between Marxism and abolitionism was anything but a one-way street. While Marxists developed remarkable influence in labor circles during this period, Marx's own thinking was itself decisively shaped by John Brown's uprising, the momentous slave struggles of the Civil War, and the labor upsurge after 1865. It is too often forgotten that, as dedicated as Marx was to theoretical research, his thinking took great leaps in periods of working-class insurgence: the 1848 revolutions and the Paris Commune of 1871 are commonly understood to be moments of such inspiration. The emancipatory movements of the Civil War, the longest revolutionary struggle of Marx's lifetime, should be counted among them.

The Civil War was central to Marx's realization that, in the increasingly integrated world economy of the second half of the nineteenth century, slave movements and anticolonial revolts could ignite waves of revolutionary struggle. There was no question of seeing the colonial world, or even relations of New World slavery, as outside global capitalism. Rather, the world capitalist system was a unitary but complexly differentiated totality. Looking through this lens, as Robin Blackburn suggests, "Marx . . . saw in South and North two species of capitalism." One of these species, allied with the counterrevolution everywhere, had to be defeated lest it destroy all democratic space for insurgent labor. So exhilarating was the emancipatory struggle in the United States that the abolitionist discourse of *emancipation* reshaped Marx's very vocabulary for proletarian liberation; the self-emancipation of the working class became the clarion call of IWA documents he crafted. In addition, the Civil War inspired the movement for shorter work hours to higher levels than had any other struggle in the world. This affirmed for Marx that the cornerstone of the political economy of the working class was the battle to reduce the life energies usurped by capital—just as it had been for bondpeople across the New World. Indeed, the US Civil War became a model for understanding the magnificent uprising of workers in Paris in 1871, the formation of the Paris Commune, and the dreadful counterrevolution that ensued. Not only did Marx refer to the latter as "a slaveholder's rebellion," but he thematized the revolutionary class struggle in Paris too as a civil war, titling his analysis *The Civil War in France*.[71]

INKLINGS OF AN ANTI-RACIST MARXISM

Finally, the upheavals associated with the general strike of the slaves attuned Marx, at least for a time, to the vital importance of foregrounding struggles against racism and prejudice. Recall his claim: "In the United States of America, every independent workers' movement was paralyzed so long as slavery disfigured a part of the republic. Labour in the white skin cannot emancipate itself where it is branded in a black skin." One dimension of this racist disfiguring of the republic consists of the *self-disfigurement* of the white worker. In his Address to Lincoln on behalf of the IWA, Marx asserted that the working men of the North were unable to achieve the true freedom of labor so long as they "*allowed* slavery to defile their own republic." Here, the racism associated with slavery is not simply a manipulative ploy imposed from above. Instead, Northern workers bear significant responsibility for it, for having allowed racial oppression to "defile" their society. In doing so, white workers affirmed the forces of competition (division) over those of cooperation (solidarity). Writing about Irish American workers, for instance, he declared, "The Irishman sees the Negro as a dangerous competitor." Rather than directing animus against the employing class, racial prejudice deflects it at the Black worker. Ironically, on the other side of the Atlantic, it was the Irish who felt the sting of such prejudice. "The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who forces down the standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker, he feels himself to be a member of the ruling nation and, therefore, makes himself a tool of his aristocrats and capitalists *against Ireland*, thus strengthening their domination *over himself*."[72] Racial prejudice is thus a mechanism by which English workers, like white workers in the United States, submit to their rulers. If they are to break this submission, the dominant groups within the working class must challenge racial and national prejudice by championing the self-determination and full equality of its oppressed sections. Not only is this a progressive attitude toward the oppressed; it is also indispensable to the reconstitution of the working class as a social force for liberation.

In these writings of the 1860s and early 1870s, Marx was incorporating the role of racism in the United States, and the partial breakthrough against it that the Civil War represented, into a broader analysis of class formation. He was recognizing hatred toward colonized people, such as the Irish, as a means by which workers of the dominant nationality or racial group disfigured themselves, becoming compliant subjects

rather than class warriors. Endeavoring to build English working-class solidarity with Ireland in 1869, Marx wrote to Engels:

> For a long time I believed it would be possible to overthrow the Irish regime by English working class ascendancy . . . Deeper study has now convinced me of the opposite. The English working class will never accomplish anything before it has got rid of Ireland. The lever must be applied in Ireland. This is why the Irish question is so important for the social movement in general."

Just as "every independent workers' movement was paralyzed so long as slavery disfigured" the United States, so the movement of workers in England was stymied by the colonial domination of Ireland—and crucially by the psychological investment of English workers in it. Indeed, continued Marx, "This antagonism [toward the Irish—DM] is the secret of the English working class's impotence."[73] It followed that the emancipation of Ireland was a prerequisite of the liberation of the working class in England, just as Black emancipation was for white workers in the United States. And this meant it was the duty of class-conscious workers to agitate for the political equality and self-determination of ethno-racially oppressed groups. This shift in Marx's position had been developing at least since the time of Engels's 1856 trip to Ireland. As Kevin Anderson has shown, this is the same period in which Marx came to a new appreciation of anticolonial struggles in India and China. And within the British working-class movement, especially after the formation of the IWA during the US Civil War, the campaign to break English workers from anti-Irish bigotry became a strategic priority.[74]

In Manchester in September 1867, a group of Irish radicals (Fenians) ambushed a prison van carrying two leaders of a failed uprising earlier that year. As anti-Irish sentiment festered, Marx pressed the General Council of the IWA to come out in defense of the right of the Irish to resist British rule. "I have sought in every way," he wrote to Engels, "to provoke . . . English workers in support of Fenianism." The whole of the Marx family, led by his daughter Eleanor, campaigned for amnesty for Irish prisoners. "To accelerate the social development in Europe," Marx wrote, "you must push on the catastrophe of official England. To do so, you must attack her in Ireland."[75] There it was: anticolonial struggle as a leading edge of anticapitalism.

This moment was not to last. Although Marx's associate Siegfried Meyer proposed IWA support for a union of African American workers in 1869, the insurgent wave was retreating as a terror campaign denied

labor, land, and voting rights to Southern Blacks, notwithstanding their courageous resistance.[76] This counterrevolution of the 1870s in the US South instated new orders of racial oppression. In tandem, the Northern alliance of labor radicals, feminists, and abolitionists fractured as the moment of Jubilee receded. White supremacy reemerged among middle-class feminists at the same time that antifeminism resurged in labor circles. Visionary organizers like Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass both resisted this breakdown of solidarity, but the tide of reaction was surging. By 1870 the National Labor Union had dissipated, and segregation took hold among unions; eight years later, the radical Women's Typographical Union collapsed.[77] The great uprising of the Paris Commune managed to recharge emancipatory hopes in 1871, however briefly. In the wake of the Commune's defeat, some 10,000 women and men marched through the streets of New York under the banner of the IWA. Rousing the demonstration were Cuban, Irish, French, and German associations marching alongside the Skidmore Light Guard, a Black military organization.[78] Alas, this was the swan song of Jubilee. Counterrevolution crushed the Commune, just as it destroyed Black Reconstruction in the US South. In 1872 the IWA disintegrated. The following year, Reconstruction gave way to a crusade against Indigenous peoples, consolidating US capitalism's postbellum "alliance of white supremacism, industrial expansion, and permanent war."[79] Amid counterrevolution and capitalist triumphalism, the legacy of abolitionist Marxism was all but lost—only to be relaunched decades later by Black socialist radicals who would shape the thinking of Du Bois, James, and Wynter, among others.[80]

Concluding Thoughts

Ghostly Hauntings, Dreams of Freedom

To write about slavery is to enter a haunted space. On this troubled terrain, ghosts howl to the rattle of chains, the crack of the whip, the cry of torn flesh; to groans emanating from watery graves. They linger over blood-red stains on barrels of sugar and bales of cotton, on account books and banking ledgers.

Ghosts, of course, are markers of horror. They lurk where unspeakable crimes have been committed. "Horror," remark two critics, "pushes beyond the hurt to the open wound. Horror is what *bleeds*." And in the wounded world we inhabit, *history bleeds*. W. E. B. Du Bois, among others, grasped this truth. Defying academic conformism, Du Bois insisted that modern society rests on an "insane will to mass murder which is the dying spasm of that decadent exploitation of human labor as a commodity, born of the Negro slave trade." Yet precisely this knowledge is refused in most historical writing, which is content to portray "a capitalism born without blood." Such portrayals may reassure. It is indecorous, after all, to portray capitalism as a horror story. Yet, truth makes its demands. And we can meet these only by acknowledging that capital comes into the world "dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt." This irreducible Marxian insight places a heavy burden on the historian.[1]

Marx's account of the rise of capitalism is a story of violent dispossession, of involuntary separation of laboring people from their lands and the communal practices inscribed there. Yet that account is incomplete.

It needs to heed the voices of Indigenous peoples who were expropriated of their lands and their communal systems; who faced genocide, extermination, and dislocation. And it needs to recognize that, for the chattel proletariat, separation from lands in Africa also forcibly severed kinship bonds—and with them social histories, names, identities—and that in the New World, sale and resale on the market restaged these horrors. Dispossession moved in tandem with the specter of social death, a connection missing in Marx's analysis. While acknowledging "the commercial hunting of blackskins" as an essential part of capital's emergence in the modern world, Marx failed to see the theft of millions of people from Africa as part of the saga of global dispossession that created the world's proletariat. This meant that he did not fully grasp the slave market—the Atlantic business of buying and selling bondpeople—as an elementary part of the global market in labor-power. I hope this book has gone some way to redressing those deficiencies.

This effort at redress, at doing justice to the blood that has flowed, also requires engaging recent calls for a *Gothic Marxism*.[2] Marx got there first, of course, beginning his greatest work by posing the problem of the "mystery of the commodity," an enigma he traces to crimes committed in the gloomy spaces of mines and mills, to the bloody extermination of Indigenous peoples, to the horrors of the slave trade, to fortunes extracted from "the capitalized blood of children."[3] Histories of slavery and capitalism built largely on stockpiling economic data can do important work. But obsessive quantification tends to mute the groans and cries of human suffering—and thus to evade the idiom of horror. This is why we should heed recent appeals for a historical materialism that tracks the blood, inspects the hauntings, and listens for the ghosts. Yet so far, work in this genre has been constrained by a failure to enter the territory of the Slave Gothic.[4] It is time to redress this shortcoming too.

Yet the Slave Gothic must be read expansively to track the violence done to the Indigenous peoples of the Atlantic World too. This is how Haiti's first great historians of the nineteenth century saw their task—as beginning with "the sufferings, the murders, and the heroism" of its First Peoples.[5] Indeed, the very name of the new Black revolutionary state—Haiti—was a deliberate homage to the earliest inhabitants of "Ayiti," systematically wiped out by Columbus and his successors. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Haitian historian Émile Nau set out to save this Indigenous history "from oblivion." More than this, Nau sought to recuperate the *unity* of Black and Indigenous Haitians, the inseparability of their histories. "The African and the Indian joined hands in chains,"

he wrote. Forming a "community of suffering," their destinies were "sealed together." Hence, they could only be freed as one—and this carried a retroactive obligation to redeem the memory of the country's First Peoples. "To free a country," Nau writes, "is to avenge all who have been oppressed here." Our vengeance, he continued, required "at the same time to avenge the unhappy Indians." Not only was this rousing commitment shared by other Haitian historians; it also echoed the calls of revolutionary abolitionists, like Richard J. Hinton, for a liberation war of enslaved Blacks, Indigenous peoples, and radical workers of all colors.[6]

This study has fallen short in this respect. While I have emphasized that settler colonial violence against Indigenous peoples was foundational to the capitalist plantation, deep histories of horror and resistance have at best been alluded to. This too is a debt unpaid.

To do justice to the ghosts—who can depart only once their calls have been heeded—means to honor their cry for repair. And this does not come cheaply. As Avery Gordon notes, hauntings contain "a will to heal." This is why the ghosts linger, calling attention to horrors that have been committed, demanding reparation. Unnerving as their presence may be, they carry a utopian longing, one that reaches toward "the something to be done that the wavering present is demanding."[7] Drenched in the afterlife of genocide and slavery, our trembling present demands an accounting with the "insane will to mass murder" that continues to haunt humanity in the epoch of racial capitalism.

One part of this responsibility is the obligation "to lend a voice to suffering," which "is a condition of all truth."[8] To pretend otherwise is to act as if our time is *not* out of joint, as if the history we are living has overcome bloody legacies of violence and oppression. It is to imagine we have been absolved of our debts to the oppressed. But that is not how things stand. There remain cries to be heard, truths to be told, powers to be seized, reparations to be paid.

This is why "the genuine conception of historical time rests entirely upon the image of redemption," as Walter Benjamin proclaimed.[9] And the image of redemption is an assemblage. It names crimes and depicts sufferings. It also captures aspirations for freedom—subterranean and overt—that have yet to be realized. Here we rejoin "critical theory's interest in the liberation of mankind." We remember Mary Gladdy's recollection of "the whisperings among the slaves—their talking of freedom." And we reaffirm Émile Nau's bold declaration that "to free a country is to avenge all who have been oppressed here."[10]

After riding with John Brown and spearheading the Eight Hours Movement, abolitionist labor leader Ira Steward confronted the end of Jubilee. Writing in the twilight of Radical Reconstruction and the Paris Commune, he proclaimed, "Something of freedom is yet to come."[11] It is indeed.

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I completed this book during a year of much personal loss. I grieve and celebrate my father, John McNally, my aunt, Merlyn James Melady, and my dear friend, Elleni Centime Zeleke. This book, and my life, are better for your love.

And where would I be without my immediate household, now situated in both Toronto and Houston? All my love to my boys, Adam, Sam, and Liam. You guys mean the world to me. And Sue, always Sue. You helped me get this book through the grinding last stage. And that is perhaps the smallest of ways in which you uplifted me. All my love, my love. This one is for you.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

Epigraph: Jacobs, "A True Tale of Slavery," 126.

1. Patterson, *Freedom*, 9.

2. Mary Gladdy in Federal Writers Project, *Slave Narratives*, v. 4 (Georgia): 26.

3. Marcuse, "Philosophy and Critical Theory," 153; Malcolm X, "Speech in Harlem." This does not mean that everything oppressed people profess is true. Rather, it means that truth pertains to their striving for emancipation, to their quest for freedom.

4. Browne, *Surviving Slavery*, 3; Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 125; Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery*, 210.

5. Belsey, *Subject of Tragedy*, 8. This is the conception that informs Marisa J. Fuentes's rejection of agency in her nonetheless important study, *Dispossessed Lives*, 8–9, 155n19. To his credit, Walter Johnson recognizes that the liberal conception of agency has its challengers, but he is not terribly clear as to what an alternative concept might look like. See Johnson, "On Agency," 113–24.

6. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 93. Hartman is rightly critical of "the troubled frame" of liberal notions of autonomy (90) but only tentatively broaches alternative conceptions of agency and action. This seems to owe something to a misidentification of Marxism with theorists like Eugene Genovese, who use the bogus concept of "paternalism" for understanding capitalist slavery. See Hartman, *Scenes*, 403n44. For an effort to clarify Marxist concepts of agency and structure, albeit one that does not adequately engage the dialectical tradition, see Callinicos, *Making History*.

7. Dabney, *Defence of Virginia*, 214.

8. Mintz, "Toward an Afro-American History," 327. There is, to be sure, an implicit essentialism of the human here. But this can be reconciled, I would argue, with Frantz Fanon's notion of a "new humanism" that breaks—radically

and dialectically—from European humanism. See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 178.

9. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 118. On Marx's development of a social ontology of individuals-in-relation, see Gould, *Marx's Social Ontology*, 30–39. And on the self-transforming character of working-class struggle, see Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*, v. 1: ch. 9–10, and Swain, *None So Fit*.

10. Patterson, *Freedom*, 9–10, 36. See also Penningroth, *Claims of Kinfolk*, 13, 24.

11. Bloch, *Principle of Hope*.

12. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 67.

13. James, *Black Jacobins*, 85–86. James also notes (85) that these bonded workers hated their masters "like revolutionary peasants everywhere." As we shall see below, this tends to be characteristic of agricultural proletarians generally.

14. Wynter, "Black Metamorphosis," 209, 12. The Jamesian streak in "Black Metamorphosis" includes an embrace of the idea that the Soviet Union and other countries of "state socialism" were in fact *state capitalist* societies. These explicitly Marxist thematics of "Black Metamorphosis" tend to become more muted in Wynter's later work. For some of the most significant examinations of this unpublished text, see Kamugisha, "Sylvia Wynter's 'Black Metamorphosis.'" As Aaron Kamugisha notes in his introduction to that symposium, Wynter's work on "Black Metamorphosis" began in the early 1970s and continued past 1978, perhaps into the early 1980s. See Kamugisha, "'That Area of Experience," 41–42.

15. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 49, translation modified; Marcuse, "Preface: A Note on Dialectic," xii.

16. Wynter, "Black Metamorphosis," 42. Wynter's formulation here adds clarity to the arguments advanced by James and Du Bois. Throughout this work, I use the terms *bondpeople*, *bondman*, and *bondwoman* (and their plurals), rather than *bondsman*, etc. My choice is consistent with Frederick Douglass's usage in his "Letter to Harriet Tubman."

17. Beckert and Rockman, *Slavery's Capitalism*, 27.

18. Carr, *What Is History?*, 15.

19. Nelson, "Who Put Their Capitalism," 302, 308; Rockman, "What Makes the History," 444, 442.

20. Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 254.

21. All of these, as Marx demonstrates, are phenomenal forms—"forms of appearance"—in which the underlying value relations of the capitalist mode of production present themselves.

22. Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, 151.

23. A totalization is a "developing unification," writes Sartre, *Critique*, v. 1: 46.

24. Kosík, *Dialectics of the Concrete*, 28–29.

25. Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, 12; Adorno, "On the Logic of the Social Sciences," 63.

26. Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, v. 1: 25; Zakim and Kornblith, *Capitalism Takes Command*, 12. With respect to Adam Smith, by book 3 of *Wealth of Nations*, he moves toward a much richer social-historical model of capitalism.

See McNally, *Against the Market*, 54–55. For my earlier treatment of Smith, see McNally, *Political Economy*, ch. 4–5.

27. There is, fortunately, a body of scholarship that has insisted on the centrality of labor and production (and social reproduction) to New World slavery. Among some of the more important works in this vein, see Berlin and Morgan, *Cultivation and Culture*; Turner, *From Chattel Slaves to Wage Slaves*; Morgan, *Laboring Women*; Newman, *A New World of Labor*; Roberts, *Slavery and Enlightenment*; Burnard, *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves*; Burnard and Garrigus, *Plantation Machine*; Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery*.

28. Mihm, *Nation of Counterfeiters*, 11–12.

29. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 280, 279. In contrast, what passes for "labor economics" is fixated on the labor market, not the labor process.

30. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 875. Like other commentators, I prefer the term *originary accumulation* to the stilted and problematic translation, "primitive accumulation." As Ian Angus has pointed out, in an important 1865 speech, Marx used the term *original expropriation* to describe this process. See Angus, "Meaning of 'So-Called Primitive Accumulation.'"

31. Rockman, "What Makes the History," 462.

32. On the liberal reformism that follows from a fixation on the sphere of exchange, see Marx, *Poverty of Philosophy*, ch. 2, and McNally, *Against the Market*, ch. 5.

33. McNally, *Political Economy*, ch. 3; Mooers, *Making of Bourgeois Europe*.

34. Genovese, *In Red and Black*, 340. The claim that slaves were "constant capital" has been repeated by many commentators. Not surprisingly, it seems to be of Weberian provenance, having been first formulated explicitly along such lines by Hall, "Incalculability," 305–18. Dale Tomich approvingly restates Hall's position in his *Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar*, 203, 211. This position has also been advanced by Post, *American Road*, and by Nesbitt, *Price of Slavery*.

35. Merleau-Ponty, *Visible and the Invisible*, 94.

36. Johnson, "Pedestal and Veil," 300. Like anyone working in the field, I am greatly indebted to Johnson's work on slavery in the US South. Moreover, I concur with his proposal that we think about plantation slavery and wage labor "as two concretely intertwined and ideologically symbiotic elements of a larger unified though internally diversified structure of exploitation" (306). That, as I will show, points in the direction of a dialectical theorization in the spirit of Marx. Unfortunately, Johnson's desultory engagement with Marxist theory tends to close off productive dialogue on these matters.

37. "Like C.L.R. James," Adam Shatz aptly writes, "Césaire considered the slave plantation an engine of capitalist modernity." See Shatz, *Rebel's Clinic*, 42.

38. Leccese, "Capitalism and Slavery"; Beckert and Rockman, "Introduction," 9.

39. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom*, 15. McDuffie is drawing on the discussion in Gaines, "Locating the Transnational," 193–202.

40. Significant recent works that explore convergences between Black radicalism and Marxism include Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom*; Davies, *Left*

of Karl Marx; McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom*; and Williams, *Making the Revolution Global*.

41. The foundational text for the concept of uneven and combined development is Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, v. 1: ch. 1. See also Lowy, *Politics of Combined and Uneven Development*; Rosenberg, "Basic Problems"; Anievas and Nisancioglu, *How the West Came to Rule*; Anievas and Matin, *Historical Sociology*. An important challenge to efforts to apply the concept to precapitalist societies is articulated by Ashman, "Capitalism, Uneven and Combined Development." For a compelling argument that in the 1850s Marx developed a "multilinear conception of history," see Anderson, *Marx at the Margins*. Stagism had roots in the vulgar Marxism of leading figures of the Second International (and was elevated to dogma by the Stalinist ruling group in Russia from the late 1920s). See Colletti, "Bernstein." Walter Johnson insightfully grasps the interlocking temporalities of global capitalism—alas, without recognizing that this has been a theme within Marxist writing for more than a century. See Johnson, "Pedestal," 304.

42. The blatant misconstrual of Marx on primitive accumulation comes from Barnes, Schoen, and Towers, "Introduction," 9. Although an important scholarly contribution to reexamining the antebellum South in global context, this book (*The Old South's Modern Worlds*) is marred by its superficial engagement with historical materialism. Not only do these authors inappropriately identify Eric Williams's arguments in *Capitalism and Slavery* with Marx's views (20n20); they also collapse fundamental theoretical distinctions by claiming that Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Charles Darwin, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, and Alexis De Tocqueville "shared in common developmental theories of change" (9).

43. See Bensaid, *Marx for Our Times*, 72–81; and Tomba, *Marx's Temporalities*, 135–50.

44. Stuart Hall "Breaking Bread," 23.

45. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 32; Thompson, "Poverty of Theory," 231.

46. Marx, *Poverty of Philosophy*, 112.

47. This refers to the famous preface to Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*.

48. James, *Black Jacobins*, 85–86.

CHAPTER 1. PLANTING AND PROFIT

Epigraph: Ligon, *True and Exact History*, 164.

1. Curtin, *Rise and Fall*, 56. See generally Vieira, "Sugar Islands," 59; de la Fuente, "Sugar and Slavery," 122, 126, 134, 145–46; Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint*, 262–67; Schwartz, "A Commonwealth within Itself," 158–66, 182–89; Cheney, *Cul de Sac*, 49–50; Bergad, *Comparative Histories*, 4–7.

2. Handler, "Father Antoine Biet's Visit," 69; Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 69; Beckles, *History of Barbados*, 24.

3. Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, 131–38; Angus, *War against the Commons*, ch. 4.

4. Kupperman, "Ligon, Richard."

5. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, 104; Schwartz, "Introduction," 7–19; Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, 38–39, 48–55.

6. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 96–97.

7. McNally, *Political Economy*, 36–40. Bacon is one of very few authors referred to by Ligon in his *History* (see 170). For appreciation of Ligon's book by members of the Hartlib Circle, see Kupperman, "Introduction," 33.

8. Slack, *Invention of Improvement*, 4–7; Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 282–83.

9. For an illuminating overview of traditions of open-field farming, see Neeson, *Commoners*.

10. Lachman, *From Manor to Market*, 129, 17; Overton, *Agricultural Revolution*, 88–90. See also Whittle, *Development of Agrarian Capitalism*, and Dimmock, *Origin of Capitalism*.

11. Dyer, *Decline and Growth*.

12. Hakluyt, *Discourse of Western Planting*.

13. Bacon, "Of Plantation," 162, 163; Hoyle, "Disafforestation and Drainage," 360–61.

14. Spenser, *View of the Present State*; Bacon as quoted by Drayton, *Nature's Government*, 59.

15. Horning, *Ireland in the Virginia Sea*, 32.

16. Cotton, *Gods Promise*.

17. Elliott, *Empires*, 9.

18. Cooper, letter to Henry Woodward, April 10, 1671; Dore, "Environment and Society," 1–29; Curtin, *Rise and Fall*, 102; Vilar, "Age of Don Quixote," 64; Bergad, *Comparative Histories*, 43.

19. Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 29, 31; Shaftesbury, letter to Mr. Joseph West, June 20, 1670, 403; Shaftesbury, letter to Mr. Joseph West and the Rest of the Counsell, June 20, 1670, 399.

20. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 875. See Grenier, *First Way of War*.

21. On slavery in Spain's New World empire, see Reséndez, *The Other Slavery*. For the overall numbers involved in the United States, see Gallay, *Indian Slave Trade*, 294–99. On South Carolina, see Weir, *Colonial South Carolina*, 26, 27.

22. Johnson, *Wicked Flesh*, 124–25; Gallay, *Indian Slave Trade*, 308–9.

23. Hofstra, *Planting of New Virginia*, 21.

24. McNally, *Blood and Money*, 110; Bacon, "Preparative," 277. On the changing landscapes of rural capitalism in England, see Johnson, *An Archaeology of Capitalism*.

25. Ohlmeyer, "'Civilizing of Those Rude Partes,'" 140, 139.

26. Simms, *Williamite Confiscation*, 195.

27. Ligon, *History*, 43–46, 58–60. For formative influence, see Bacon, "Preparative." Jordy Rosenberg has explored an intriguing case of Ligon's anxious conflation of the female body, defecation, and the preservation of nature in his "Afterword," 279–80.

28. Ligon, *History*, 69–72, 67, 76–87.

29. Ligon, *History*, 67, 72, 75, 93, 99.

30. Beckles, "Colours of Property," 39. A similar argument is made by Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 9.

31. On the overall figures for indentured servants to the British colonies, see McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, 242, who suggest that indentured servants comprised two-thirds of European immigrants in this period. A lower estimate, in the area of 50 percent, is proposed by Tomlins, *Freedom Bound*, 29–51.

32. Beckles and Downes, "Economics of Transition," 235–36, 229; Bilder, "Struggle over Immigration," 764; Morgan, *American Slavery*, 129, 128. See also Smith, *Colonists in Bondage*; Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery*; Menard, *Migrants, Servants and Slaves*; Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 52–57; Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 16. For the case of the Philadelphia servant sale, see Rediker, *Fearless Benjamin Lay*, 50. On "proto-slavery" see Beckles, "Plantation Production and White 'Proto-Slavery.'"

33. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 6.

34. Dunn, *Tale of Two Plantations*, 142. In addition, enslaved laborers also contributed work as children.

35. Stuart Schwartz suggests early productivity gains of "only" 20 percent due to gang labor. See Schwartz, "Introduction," 19. But as Robin Blackburn points out, longer-term gains seem to have been at least 50 percent, and on the largest and most efficient estates they may have been many times higher than that. See Blackburn, *American Crucible*, 70. For an analysis in terms of the economics of comparative advantage, which suggests major gains in productivity, see Toman, "Gang System," 310–23.

36. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 439, 443.

37. On the deep cultural meanings of the slave work song, see Jones, *Blues People*, 18–28.

38. Beckles and Downes, "Economics," 237, 243; Beckles, *History of Barbados*, 38, table 3; Walsh, *Motives of Honor*, 202. On the growth of the British slave trade, see Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt*, and the Slave Voyages database.

39. See Drax's "Instructions"; van den Bel, Hulsman, and Wagenaar, *The Voyages*, 64; Kars, *Blood on the River*, 51–52; Beckles, *History of Barbados*, 53; and Higman, *Slave Populations*, 74, table 4.1. It is true that the Dutch colony of Surinam had a larger enslaved population. But this colony had been founded by colonizers from Barbados, on the plantation model that prevailed there. When the Dutch captured it during the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665–67), it held about 2,500 African slaves and another 500 Amerindian slaves, representing five to ten times the number of bondpeople held in Berbice, a colony founded by the Dutch.

40. Walsh, *Motives of Honor*, 298–307, 203. On the constitution of the Chesapeake gentry as a self-reproducing ruling class, see Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 9–10, 261–313.

41. Eltis, "Free and Coerced Transatlantic Migration," 255.

42. The classic study of agricultural service in England is Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*; see esp. 3, 4, 11. On the distinction between service and apprenticeship in English husbandry, see Tomlins, *Freedom Bound*, 79–80. On crimping and impressment, see Newman, *New World of Labor*, 30–31; Rogers, *Press Gang*; and Rediker, *Slave Ship*.

43. Gallenson, *White Servitude*, 6–9; Diouf, *Slavery's Exiles*, 18. Walsh argues (*Motives of Honor*, 138–39) that the practice of lifelong and hereditary bondage of Blacks was established among Virginia planters by the 1640s, well before its legal codification.

44. Linda Heywood and John Thornton point out that at the outset English colonizers considered African slaves to be subject to "indefinite" service. The idea of permanent bondage had not yet solidified. See Heywood and Thornton, *Central Africans*, ch. 6.

45. Ligon, *History*, 72, 96. See also 67, 75, 77.

46. Thorndale, "Virginia Census of 1619," 155–70; *What Tyme Indians Serve* (Act XII, October 1670).

47. Gallenson, *White Servitude*, 6–9; Diouf, *Slavery's Exiles*, 18; Breen and Innes, *"Myne Owne Ground,"* 20. Lorena Walsh, in *Motives of Honor* (116–17), cautions against overstating the degree of indentured servitude among Virginia's Black population. Walsh further argues (138–39) that the practice of lifelong and hereditary bondage (by maternal descent) of Blacks was established among wealthy Virginia planters by the 1640s, well before legal codification.

48. Tomlins, *Freedom Bound*, 264–69; Beckles, *White Servitude*, 8; Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 38–41; Jordan, *White over Black*, 64; "Certaine Propositions for the better accommodating ye Foreign Plantations with Servants," as quoted in Newman, *New World*, 73.

49. Menard, "Transitions to African Slavery," 34; Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 7.

50. For an important corrective to the invisibilization of Indigenous enslavement, see Reséndez, *The Other Slavery*. The Barbadian directive of 1636 is quoted by Jordan, *White over Black*, 64.

51. Ligon, *History*, 149–68, 193.

52. Ligon, *History*, 165–66. Ligon was certainly right that sugar prices were substantially higher on the English market. For that and Barbadian sugar marketing via commissioners in England, see Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 2, 5–6, 102–3, 121.

53. Ligon, *History*,183–92, 168.

54. Ligon, *History*, 164, 189. Russell Menard has urged that the gang labor system did not emerge in one fell swoop (*Sweet Negotiations*, 91–92). He is undoubtedly right. But later innovations were made upon a plantation labor regime that was constructed in the 1640s and that showed significant financial returns from the start.

55. Belgrove, *Treatise upon Husbandry*, 64–65.

56. Dickson, *Letters on Slavery*, 23, emphasis in original.

57. Rosenthal, *Accounting for Slavery*; Smith, *Mastered by the Clock*.

58. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, 50, 51. Of course, "skilled" labor ought to be treated as a compound of "simple" or "unskilled" work, but this was true just as much of manufacture. Mintz's analysis fits entirely with the classic investigation of sugar mills in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Cuba, which moved into sugar much later than Barbados and Jamaica. See Fraginals, *Sugar Mill*. As Burnard and Garrigus point out, by the 1720s most enslaved workers

on sugar estates "lived and worked in labor forces of one hundred or more." See Burnard and Garrigus, *Plantation Machine*, 31.

59. Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the Cross*, 208. On the production process in sugar, see also Fraginals, *Sugarmill*, and Tomich, *Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar*, 196–99.

60. None of this is to understate the significance of cotton as a slave-produced global commodity. Indeed, by the nineteenth century it had eclipsed sugar, becoming the key import for British industrial capitalism. We shall return to this issue in chapter 10. But the integrated plantation based on gang labor began on sugar estates; it was there that it acquired its modular form.

61. Bush, *Slave Women*, 30–31. Of course, other colonial empires eventually copied the British example. Yet, even when the French Caribbean moved considerably toward the English model, especially in colonial Saint-Domingue following the Seven Years War (1756–63), its plantation system was always hampered by metropolitan trade regulations, property laws, and the inadequacies of colonial finance, as we shall see.

62. Curtin, *Rise and Fall*, 83; Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 146–47.

63. Ligon, *History*, 101, 105–6, emphasis in original.

64. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 72; Beckles, "'Riotous and Unruly Lot,'" 515–16, 513–14; Beckles, "Colours of Property," 36–51; Beckles, "Rebels and Reactionaries," 8–10; Newman, *New World of Labor*, 82; Drax, "Instructions," 587 (I have adjusted "ffewer" to "fewer" in the quotation); Beckles, *White Servitude*, 10; McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, 153; Burnard and Garrigus, *Plantation Machine*, 18, 137–63, 182–86. On race as an emergent category, see also Mair, *Historical Study of Women*, 7. The subheading for this section, "Black Labor, White Sugar," is a nod to my colleague Philip A. Howard and his *Black Labor, White Sugar*, whose focus is on the postslavery period.

65. Burnard, *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves*, 3, 27, 33, 54, 78–89, 38; Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 96; Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 287, 781–82. Edward E. Baptist has also identified the importance of terror as an organizing principle of plantation slavery in the Lower South of the United States. More precisely, he has described "torture" as a "factor of production." See Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*, 141. This is a valuable insight, but it does not require the conclusion, to which Baptist inclines, that *all* increases in productivity represented intensifications of torture. Despotic, even terroristic, labor discipline also enabled other kinds of productive innovations—from seed strains to tools and machines—to be imposed on workers, no matter how worker-unfriendly they were with respect to the pace and quality of work. On plantations as prison labor camps, see De Genova, "A Racial Theory of Labour," 220.

66. Ligon, *History*, 164; "Act for the Better Governing of Negroes and Slaves" (1712), in *Statutes at Large of South* Carolina, v. 7: 352.

CHAPTER 2. GEORGE WASHINGTON

Epigraph: Marx, *Capital*, v. 2: 133 (translation altered).

1. Jackson and Twohig, *Diaries of George Washington*, v. 1: 232–34.

2. Parker, *Recollections of Slavery Times*, 64.

3. Martineau, *Time, Capitalism, and Alienation*; Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, 200–16. Dale Tomich's important study of sugar and slavery in Martinique flounders on this point, failing to understand how capital can impose abstract time on labor processes that must adapt to natural cycles, as is the case for all forms of agrarian capitalism. Tomich writes that in Martinique, despite "careful time discipline . . . time was not an abstract and homogeneous standard." But how is time discipline exercised without imposing an abstract standard on individual workers? Tomich then reverts to Adam Smith's view that slaves had no "incentive" to increase output "without the wage relation." Not only does this misunderstand the coercion of the wage relation too by confusing market compulsion with incentives; it also ignores all the forms of payment to bondpeople that planters used to boost output. I return to these issues in chapter 6. See Tomich, *Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar*, 334, 338.

4. Washington, circular to William Stuart et al.; Washington, agreement with David Cowan; Washington, letter to John Fairfax; Lund Washington, letter to George Washington.

5. Jackson and Twohig, *Diaries of George Washington*, v. 2: 30; *Papers of George Washington: Financial Papers, General Ledger A*, image 445; Washington, Enclosure: Washington's Plans for His River, Union, and Muddy Hole Farms.

6. Washington, letter to James Anderson; Smith, *Mastered by the Clock*, 3, 35–36, 119.

7. Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, 90; Phillips, *Life and Labor*, 336.

8. Martineau, *Time, Capitalism, and Alienation*, 95. On the persistence of natural temporalities in agrarian capitalism, see Mann, *Agrarian Capitalism*, ch. 2.

9. Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment*, 68–72; Brown, *Slave Life in Georgia*, 145, 160; Tomich, *Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar*, 328; Grandy, *Narrative of the Life of Moses Grandy*, 27; McBride, "Memoranda of the Culture of Sugar Cane," 352–53; Smith, *Mastered by the Clock*, 5, 11, 70, 121; Charley Williams quoted in Botkin, *Treasury of Southern Folklore*, 587; Follett, *Sugar Masters*, 108, 110.

10. Maclay, *Diary of William Maclay*, 258; Thompson, *"Only Unavoidable Subject,"* 78; Ragsdale, *Washington at the Plow*, 117; George Washington, letter to William Tilgham, July 21, 1793. Washington differentiated among broad types of labor—ditch digging, carpentry, planting, etc. But within these categories, he treated workdays as homogeneous. The best overview of Washington's farm accounts can be found in Ragsdale, *Washington at the Plow*, 116–20.

11. Walsh, *Motives of Honor*, 297–308; Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment*, 56–68; "Keep a Plantation Journal." On Affleck and Southern recordkeeping, see also Heier, "A Content Comparison," 131–50; and Rosenthal, *Accounting for Slavery*, 86–95. For the significance of double-entry bookkeeping, see Carruthers and Espeland, "Accounting for Rationality," 31–69.

12. Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House*, 133–34.

13. Barrow, "Diaries," 409; William Byrd II, as quoted by Walsh, *Motives of Honor*, 252; Maclay, *Diary*, v. 9: 258; Wiencek, *An Imperfect God*, 93.

14. Berry, *Price for Their Pound*, 68; Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, 58. On this point, see also Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 35, 43–44. For the way in which group, rather than individual, productivity was often the focus of planter accounts, see Fleishman and Tyson, "Interface of Race and Accounting," 115–22.

15. Dawkins, Jamaica Account, 1779.; Anonymous, "The Effects of High Prices of Slaves," 472.

16. van der Linden, "Re-constructing the Origins," 512. See also Metzer, "Rational Management," 123–50; Rosenthal, *Accounting for Slavery*, 75–77, 29–31, 43–44.

17. Bacon, "Preparative," 279. I have discussed Baconianism, political arithmetic, and political economy in McNally, *Political Economy*, ch. 1.

18. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 134–37. For further elaboration, see McNally, *Monsters of the Market*, 122–26.

19. Marx, *Poverty of Philosophy*, 54.

20. George Washington, "Articles of Agreement with Benjamin Buckler," February 25, 1771, as quoted by Mary V. Thompson, *"Only Unavoidable Subject,"* 91; Jackson and Twohig, *Diaries of George Washington*, v. 5: 8–10.

21. Lander, "Slave Labor in South Carolina," 161–73; Dunn, *Tale of Two Plantations*, 191; Walsh, *Motives of Honor*, 210–12, 302–6, 432; Boles, *Black Southerners*, 71–72; Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment*, 93–102; Shepherd, *Livestock, Sugar, and Slavery*, 137. For diversification in Martinique, see Tomich, *Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar*, 328–29. On the shifting balance, according to price fluctuations, between diversification and maximization of the primary cash crop, see Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 22–25. On Cuba and Brazil in the nineteenth century, see Kaye, "Second Slavery," 639–40.

22. Hudson, "'A Disposition to Work,'" 94; Walsh, *Motives of Honor*, 302–6, 340–1; Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 352; Thompson, *"Only Avoidable Subject,"* 106–7; Higman, *Slave Populations*, 188.

23. Genovese, *Political Economy of Slavery*, 23, 31, 16. In a later text, Genovese slightly qualified these claims by insisting that the antebellum South was "prebourgeois" but "far from being feudal." See Genovese, *In Red and Black*, 340. However, in some ways this text, with its remarkable misunderstanding of Marxian concepts, only makes matters worse.

24. Coclanis, "How the Low Country Was Taken," 61.

25. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 345; Oakes, *Ruling Race*, 170; Thompson, "Peculiarities of the English," 43.

26. Wiencek, *Imperfect God*, 97, 103; Lee, "Mount Vernon," 13–14, 17, 20, 22; Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion*, 10–11.

27. Walsh, *Motives of Honor*, 534–35; Ragsdale, *Washington at the Plow*, 6–7, 30–36, 107–16; Wiencek, *Imperfect God*, 97–105. For the concept of "planter-capitalists" as early as 1922, see African Blood Brotherhood, "Program," 449.

28. Ragsdale, *Washington at the Plow*, 51–52.

29. Chaplin, *Anxious Pursuits*; Starobin, *Industrial Slavery*; Dew, *Bond of Iron*.

30. Ragsdale, *Washington at the Plow*, 20–21, 129, 206–7, 262. On Washington's slave rentals, see, for example, Washington, "Negroes Belonging to George Washington" and "A List of Negroes Hired from Mrs. French."

31. Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, ch. 5; Pares, *Planters and Merchants*, ch. 1; Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 2–12. On the "new merchants" of the West Indies trade, see Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution.*

32. Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House*, 125–27; Morris, *Becoming Southern*, ch.2; Faust, *James Henry Hammond*, 6–10, 70–72, 111, 129, 115–17.

33. See, for example, Smith, *Slavery, Family and Gentry*, 145, 149, 167–68, 186–90, 219–20; Kilbourne, *Debt, Investment, and Slaves*, 18–22; Schweikart, *Banking in the American South*, ch. 1, 5; Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House*, 224–26.

34. The literature on settler colonialism is by now voluminous. For purposes of this study, my analysis is indebted to Byrd, *Transit of Empire*; Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*; Estes, *Our History*; Konishi, "First Nations Scholars"; Barker, "The Corporation and the Tribe"; Goldstein, "'In the Constant Flux'"; Harris, "Racial Alchemy of Debt"; Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism"; and Englert, *Settler Colonialism*. I also wish to acknowledge the pathbreaking doctoral dissertation by John Carlson, "Empowering Indigenous Self-Determination."

35. McNally, *Blood and Money*, 179–82; Calloway, *Indian World of George Washington*, 36–40; Wiencek, *Imperfect God*, 59–63, 67; Thompson, "*Only Unavoidable Subject,"* 135; Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 742; Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 10; Power, *Impressions of America*; Olmsted, *Journey through Texas*, 51.

36. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 91–92; Higman, *Slave Populations*, 105, table 5.2; da Costa, *Crowns of Glory*, 47; Vlach, *Back of the Big House*, 7–8. See also Scarborough, *The Overseer*, 10–11, tables 1 and 2. On Mississippi, see Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 119–20.

37. Washington, agreement with Philip Bater; Washington, letter to Anthony Whiting; Washington, letter to William Pearce, August 31, 1794.

38. Isaac, *Landon Carter's Kingdom*, 43; Edward Harden quoted by Oakes, *Ruling Race*, 128–29.

39. Oakes, *Slavery and Freedom*, 99. Early on, when vast reserves of land were available, British West Indian planters also displayed considerable mobility. For instance, Thomas Modyford, Richard Ligon's patron, relocated from Barbados to Jamaica, where he built an enormous fortune and became governor of the island.

40. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 227–28; Center for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery, "Alderman Richard Beckford."

41. Isaac, *Landon Carter's Kingdom*, 58. See generally, Nelson, *Architecture and Empire*; Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*; Waterhouse, *A New World Gentry*; and Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 117. For Washington's emulation of British styles, see Wiencek, *Imperfect God*, 8, 37, 138, and Ragsdale, *Washington at the Plow*, 30–36, 67–68, 102, 201–2.

42. Genovese, *World the Slaveholders Made*, 112, 121; Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 345.

43. Graham, "Economics or Culture?" 101–7, 111; Schweikart, *Banking in the Old South*, 190–201. See also Graham, "Slavery and Economic Development," 620–55. As Graham rightly notes, although the nineteenth-century

South looks less modern by comparison with the US North, it appears relatively advanced when we globalize the analysis.

44. Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 79.

45. Stampp, *Peculiar Institution*, 326. I acknowledge the semblance of a shift (though still a deeply problematic one) in Genovese's best book, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*. But the plantation itself as a social-economic institution is not retheorized there.

46. Thompson, "Peculiarities of the English," 40. For older studies in this vein, see Tawney, *Agrarian Problem*; Campbell, *English Yeoman*; Hoskins, *Midland Peasant*; and Hilton, *English Peasantry*. Since the seminal essays of Robert Brenner in *Past and Present* in 1976 and 1981, the discussion of agrarian capitalism in England has become much richer. Brenner's essays and responses to it are collected in Ashton and Philpin, *Brenner Debate*. My own contribution to this debate can be found in McNally, *Political Economy*. Among other important contributions to this literature are Thirsk, *Agrarian Regions*; Mooers, *Making of Bourgeois Europe*; Whittle, *Development of Agrarian Capitalism*; and Dimmock, *Origin of Capitalism*.

47. Marx, "A Review of Guizot's Book," 93; Thompson, "Peculiarities of the English," 43.

48. Bowman, *Masters and Lords*, 165; Engels, letter to Marx, May 23, 1862. For bourgeois agrarian elites outside North America, see Lago, *Agrarian Elites*, and Barker, "Origins and Significance of the Meiji Restoration."

49. Cain and Hopkins, "Gentlemanly Capitalism," 504.

50. See McNally, "Locke, Levellers, and Liberty."

51. Perkins, *Origins of Modern English Society*, 446; Roberts, *Paternalism*, 270–76.

52. Follett, *Sugar Masters*, 6.

53. Harrison, *Quest for the New Moral World*; Scranton, *Proprietary Capitalism*; Crew, *Town in the Ruhr*; Eley, "German Model," 113.

54. On the antidemocratic values of Locke and liberal political economy, see McNally, *Against the Market*, ch. 3. On slaveholders' liberal free trade commitments, see Schoen, "Alternatives to Dependence," 50–75; Shore, *Southern Capitalists*; and Oakes, *Slavery and Freedom*, 61–67. For the liberal economics of slave trading, see Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt*. As is typically the case with capitalist actors, Southern planter commitment to free trade could easily shift toward protectionism when economic circumstances changed, as they did by the late 1830s, only to move back toward free trade in the 1850s.

55. Faust, *James Henry Hammond*, 260–69, 73; Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 106–14, 119–26; McDonnell, *Considerations*; da Costa, *Crowns of Glory*, 34; McClellan, *Colonialism and Science*.

56. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 284–96. On the softening of slave codes in the nineteenth century, see Rose, *Slavery and Freedom*, 23–24. On slave flight and unrest during the Revolutionary War, see Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*; Frey, *Water from the Rock*; and Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*. On the "general strike" in South Carolina during the Revolutionary War, see Olwell, *Masters, Subjects, and Slaves*, 262.

57. Henry Laurens, letter to Alexander Hamilton.

58. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 12; Osofsky, "Introduction." See also Levine, *Black Culture*, 300–320, and Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*. Genovese seems to acknowledge some of the dissembling by Black bondpeople in his discussion of the collapse of planter paternalism during the Civil War (*Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 97–118). But he cannot stop himself from returning to his conviction about "the slaves' commitment to the aristocratic ethos" (116), which entirely misses the point.

59. Isaac, *Landon Carter's Kingdom*, 75; Dunbar, *Never Caught*, 104–5; Wiencek, *Imperfect God*, 125–28; Ragsdale, *Washington at the Plow*, 153–56.

60. "Mr. Richard Beckford's Instructions to Messrs. John Cope, Richard Lewing, Robert Mason, 10 April 1754," as quoted by Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 149. On the harshness of planter rule in Jamaica, see Anonymous, *An Essay Concerning Slavery* 18, 38.

61. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 647; Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 194–202, quotation at 198. Across Genovese's texts there is a conflation of paternalism with patriarchalism. It is true that the line between the two can be blurry. But it is crucial to note that planter paternalists did *not* adhere to a patriarchal conception of political power of the sort advanced by Robert Filmer. The vast majority subscribed, at least implicitly, to John Locke's contractual account of political authority.

62. Faust, *James Henry Hammond*, 73, 103.

63. Litwack, *Been in the Storm*, 152; John H. Phillips, as quoted by Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 99; Benjamin, *Bonds of Love*, 54.

64. Carter, "July 25, 1775" and "Thursday July 10, 1777"; Isaac, *Landon Carter's Kingdom*, 17. See also Isaac's insightful analysis (313–22) of Carter's attempt to dominate and control his enslaved surgeon, Nassaw.

65. Washington, letter to Oliver Wolcott, Jr; Washington, letter to Joseph Whipple (the words "with her" appear in Washington's draft of this letter); Joseph Whipple, letter to Oliver Wolcott, as cited by Dunbar, *Never Caught*, 146.

CHAPTER 3. "WITHOUT A SERVANT TO MAKE HIS BED"

Epigraph: Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, v. 2: 302–3. The first part of this chapter draws on my article "Marx on Colonialism and Bonded Labor."

1. Among the best treatments of Wakefield (and his brothers) is Temple, *A Sort of Conscience*.

2. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 932–33. The quote inside the cited passage from Marx is from Wakefield, *England and America*, v. 2: 33. Marx errs, however, in suggesting that Thomas Peel arrived with 3,000 immigrants; the actual figure Wakefield gives is 300.

3. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 936.

4. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 325–26; Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 899.

5. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 940.

6. McDonnell, *Considerations on Negro Slavery*, 59, 63, 71.

7. Wakefield, *England and America*, v. 2: 15, 29, 191, 36, 35. It is critical to point out here that Marx correctly reads Wakefield as discussing conditions that

produced a shortage of labor *for capital*. Mainstream economists, like E.D. Domar, tried to construct a transhistorical model in which availability of land generates slavery or serfdom across the ages. See Domar, "Causes of Slavery or Serfdom," 18–32. This flawed argument cannot account for actual history. On this point, see Patterson, "Structural Origins of Slavery," 12–34.

8. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 6; Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations*, 48.

9. Coincident with the rise of New World slavery, as Peter Kolchin has pointed out, there occurred an enserfment of large sections of the Russian peasantry, i.e. an alternative form of bondage. See Kolchin, *Unfree Labor*.

10. Franklin, *The Interest of Great Britain Considered*, 54; Burnard, *Mastery, Slavery, and Desire*, 52; Cecelski, *Waterman's Song*, 115; Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery*, 168; William S. Pettigrew, letter to James C. Johnston, January 6, 1847.

11. Jonas, "Wages in Early Colonial Maryland," 27–38; Franklin, *Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind*; Rosenthal, *Accounting for Slavery*, 50–71. For enslaved workers in industry, see Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South*; Dew, *Bond of Iron*; and Zaborney, *Slaves for Hire*, ch. 6. A useful bibliography on worker turnover in US economic history is provided by Owen, "History of Labor Turnover."

12. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 48. On the overall figures for indentured servants to the British colonies, see McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, 242, who suggest that indentured servants comprised two-thirds of European immigrants in this period. A lower estimate, in the area of 50 percent, is proposed by Tomlins, *Freedom Bound*, 29–51.

13. Craven and Hay, "Criminalization of 'Free' Labour," 72, 83, 80; Rockman, *Scraping By*, 6; Steinfeld, *Coercion, Contract, and Free Labor*, 9, 29. See also Boutang, *De l'escavage au salariat*, 25. Evidence like this also refutes Nick Nesbitt's claim (*Price of Slavery*, 34) that, "unlike slaves, laborers by law can quit their employment."

14. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 16; Beckles, "Plantation Production and White 'Proto-Slavery,'" 21–45. For the concept of "laborlords," see Wright, *Old South, New South*, 18, 49. Unfortunately, Wright fails to appreciate that this made planters a class whose wealth derived from the surplus value generated by commodity-producing laborers.

15. Magliari, "'A Species of Slavery,'" 524, 526; Kiser, "A 'Charming Name for a Species of Slavery,'" 169–89; Harris, "Racial Alchemy of Debt," 103–4; California, "An Act to Punish Vagrants, Vagabonds, and Suspicious Persons," 217; O'Brassil-Kulfan, "Vagabonds and Paupers," 443–69.

16. Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies*, 74. See generally Lai, *Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar*, and Ho-Jung, *Coolies and Cane*.

17. Lenin, *Development of Capitalism*, 181, 199.

18. Lenin, "Economic Content of Narodnism," 484. For his emphasis on this passage, I am indebted to Banaji "Modes of Production in a Materialist Conception of History," 55–56.

19. Lenin, *Development of Capitalism*, 33. On semibonded migrant labor today, see Ferguson and McNally, "Precarious Migrants."

20. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 345. In opposition to Marx, Nesbitt (*Price of Slavery*, 3) suggests that slave-produced commodities could only have been commodities *without* surplus value. Unfortunately, his circular reasoning is based upon confusions as to what labor-power actually is and how it produces value for capital. I shall return to these issues.

21. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 881; Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 125.

22. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 127. When goods are produced *for* the world market in a competitive framework, they are subject to the law of value that compels producing units to meet or exceed average standards of production (socially necessary labor time).

23. The proposal of 1750 as a benchmark in this regard is made by Burnard, *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves*, 139. To be sure, full integration into world markets came much earlier in some areas—as early as the 1650s for large gentry in Barbados—but it was a generalized phenomenon by the middle of the eighteenth century and the backdrop to the emergence of "the second slavery." It may be true, as Robin Blackburn argues, that fully *industrial* slavery emerges from about 1800. Certainly it was in the first decades of the nineteenth century that global prices systematically converged, as I show in chapter 10. Nevertheless, systematic patterns of improvement on Caribbean plantations are observable by at least 1750, when planters regularly innovated in response to heightened competition and rising costs. See Watts, *West Indies*, 420–34. For Blackburn's assessment, see *American Crucible*, 22.

24. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 297. As I argue later, Genovese's overall arguments rely upon fundamentally static Weberian-type categories of analysis.

25. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 210, 272–81, 209; Zahedieh, *Capital and the Colonies*, ch. 6; Genovese, *Political Economy of Slavery*, 22. For the insistence that market dependence is the essence of capitalism, see Wood, *Origin of Capitalism*.

26. Oakes, *Ruling Race*, 92, 94; Rosenthal, *Accounting for Slavery*; Breen and Innes, *"Myne Owne Ground,"* 50; Marx, *Capital*, v.1: 254; Post, *American Road*, 107. Post, however, holds that plantation production was not capitalist because slaves were an element of constant capital, a view from which I dissent for reasons discussed in the next two chapters.

27. Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 31; Menard, "The Tobacco Industry," 109–77.

28. Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 81; Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract*, 95; Clegg, "Credit Market Discipline," 343–76. It is important to emphasize that for Marx, contrary to mainstream economics, increasing capitalist productivity is not about reducing inputs of "living labour in general" but, rather, about reducing "the *paid* part of living labour." See Marx, *Capital*, v. 3: 371. In practice, increasing labor productivity *for capital* requires that less labor time is devoted to producing the relative value of the wages received by workers (in money or in kind).

29. Kriedte, Medick, and Schlumbohm, *Industrialization before Industrialization*; McNally, *Against the Market*, ch. 1.

30. Marx, "Results of the Immediate Process of Production," in *Capital*, v. 1: 1021, emphasis in original; Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 454.

31. Marx, "Economic Manuscript of 1861–63," 262, 113, emphasis in original.

32. Marx himself is ambiguous on this. He writes at one point that in the plantation system "the capitalist mode of production exists, although only in a formal sense" due to the absence of wage labor. He then immediately qualifies this by stating, "But the business in which slaves are used is conducted by *capitalists*." See Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, v. 2: 302–3.

33. Curtin, *Rise and Fall*, 12.

34. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 443, 450. Patrick Murray rightly emphasizes the ways in which real subsumption pivots on the powers of cooperative labor under the direction of capital. See Murray, *Mismeasure of Wealth*, 294–324. However, he does not address this phenomenon in relation to capitalist bonded labor.

35. Wynter, "Black Metamorphosis," 12.

36. The classic statement of this position is to be found in Wallerstein, *Modern World System*. Wallerstein is right to see the capitalist world economy as a total system that is greater than the sum of its parts. But his totality is an abstract one, bereft of the complex differentiations that constitute a real social whole. This is why he can write (127) that "the 'relations of production' that define a system are the 'relations of production' of the whole system." While the laws of the total system do have a determining effect on all its components, they do not reduce all components to identity. As a result, Wallerstein does not distinguish the immediate relations of production from the laws of motion that characterize the system. This leads to a failure to delineate the distinct ways in which the law of value integrates different components of a complex capitalist system. A much stronger presentation of a modified World Systems approach is offered by Tomich, *Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar*, albeit one with which I have theoretical differences. Among these, I depart from Tomich over his claim that slaves constituted a form of *constant capital*.

37. For the case of peasant jute farmers in the nineteenth-century Bengal Delta, see Ali, *Local History of Global Capital*.

38. Russell Menard may be right that the gang system acquired its completed form in Barbados in the 1740s (*Sweet Negotiations*, 96), but defining elements emerged much earlier.

39. Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 148–50; Turner, *Contested Bodies*, 74; Fogel, *Without Consent*, 45; Moitt, "Women, Work and Resistance," 156–57.

40. Toman, "Gang System," 314–15, 320–21; Menn, *Large Slaveholders*, 2; Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the Cross*, 208.

41. Dickson, *Letters on Slavery*, 23, emphasis in original; Olmsted, *Journey in the Back Country*, 81–82.

42. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 450; Metzer, "Rational Management"; van der Linden, "Re-constructing the Origins of Modern Labor Management"; Rosenthal, *Accounting for Slavery*, ch. 3; Burnard, *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves*, 27; Scarborough, *Overseer*, 8–9.

43. Morgan, "Task and Gang Systems"; Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects*, 46; Faust, *James Henry Hammond*, 74–75, 92, 121; Faust, "Culture, Conflict, Community," 86.

44. On intensification of tasking in South Carolina, see Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise*, 157–60. On planters combining the two work systems, see Schweninger, "Underside of Slavery," 7; Buchanan, *Black Life on the Mississippi*, 38; Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise*, 159; Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 179; Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 95–96; da Costa, *Crowns of Glory*, 79.

45. See Marglin, "What Do Bosses Do?," 60–112. Also of interest in this regard are Pollard, "Factory Discipline in the Industrial Revolution," 254–71; Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism"; and McKendrick, "Josiah Wedgwood," 30–55.

46. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 443, 450, 549; Stampp, *Peculiar Institution*, 42.

47. Angus, *War against the Commons*.

48. Walsh, *Motives of Honor*, 190; Carr and Walsh, "Economic Organization and Labor Diversification," 158–59; Ligon, *History*, 94.

49. Fogel, *Without Consent*, 440n67; Walsh, *Motives of Honor*, 199–200.

50. Heatherton, *Arise!*, 1.

51. Waterhouse, *New World Gentry*, 52; Gaspar, "With a Rod of Iron," 343–66. See also Tomlins, *Freedom Bound*, 452. On Virginia in this regard, see Breen and Innes, *"Myne Owne Ground."* See also Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 8–18.

52. Hening, *Statutes at Large*, v. 2: 602.

53. Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 10–11; Godwyn, *The Negro's and Indian's Advocate*, as quoted by Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 119.

54. Virginia, "An Act to Repeale a Former Law Making Indians and Others Free"; "An Act for Suppressing Outlying Slaves," in Hening, *Collection of All the Laws*; "An Act Directing the Trial of Slaves, Committing Capital Crimes; and for the more Effectual Punishing Conspiracies and Insurrections of them; and for the Better Government of Negroes, Mullatoes, and Indians, Bond or Free"; "An Act Directing the Trial of Slaves, Committing Capital Crimes; and for the more Effectual Punishing Conspiracies and Insurrections of them; and for the Better Government of Negroes, Mullatoes, and Indians, Bond or Free."

55. Virginia, "An Act for Suppressing Outlying Slaves."

56. Fields, "Slavery, Race and Ideology," 107; Gaspar, "With a Rod of Iron," 343–66.

57. Morgan, *American Slavery*, 312.

58. Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 5; Fields, "Slavery, Race and Ideology," 99. Let me emphasize that this argument does not reduce race to class but, rather, insists on their co-constitution.

59. Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery*, 73, 8, 109; Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, 2, 6. See generally, De Genova, "A Racial Theory of Labour."

CHAPTER 4. LIVING LABOR AND PLANTER PROFITS

Epigraphs: Garnett, "Address," 141; Parker, *Recollections of Slavery*, 61.

1. Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations*, 47–48. Mintz's argument was directed at Eugene Genovese. He went on to suggest rightly that the circumstances of enslaved commodity producers and wage laborers are not "identical." But, as

we shall see, there can be a unity-of-the-diverse (identity in difference) beyond simple identity.

2. Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise*, 156; Hartlib, "Reformed Virginian Silk-Worm"; James Grant to the Earl of Egmont, February 9, 1769, as quoted by Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects*, 188.

3. Note that all such evidence works with what Marx called "cost prices," which have inherent distortions even though they map broad trends.

4. Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 15; Craton, *Sinews of Empire*, 138–39; Follett, *Sugar Masters*, 27; Whitten, "Tariff and Profit," 233; Chaplin, *Anxious Pursuits*; Dusinberre, *Them Dark Days*, 13–17; Swan, "Structure and Profitability of the Antebellum Rice Industry," 321–25; Lowe and Campbell, *Planters and Plain Folks*, 169; Ward, "Profitability of Sugar Planting," 197–213; Debien, *Comptes, Profits, Esclaves et Travaux*, 1–55; Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise*, 243. On rates of return in Texas for 1850 and 1860, see Campbell, *Empire for Slavery*, 75, table 5.

5. Evans, "Economics of American Negro Slavery," 185–243; Rönnbäck, "Revisiting the Profitability of Slavery," 106–7. As I will explain below, the actual rate of profit on slave-based production should be derived from their surplus product relative to the costs of production.

6. Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South*, 148–50.

7. Since not all enslaved people worked in the fields—some were children, some superannuated, others, domestics, or specialized workers, like carpenters, spinners, or blacksmiths—only some proportion of all bondpeople (often assumed to be around 50 percent) produced the surplus product in cotton.

8. This confusion enters into the model advanced by economic historians Alfred H. Conrad and John R. Meyer, who used both data on actual costs and real output alongside slave prices to assess the profitability of plantation slavery. So, while they offered an estimate of real returns, Conrad and Meyer also projected a hypothetical income stream based on "expectations" of future values of slave property and other "capital." They further confused matters by supplementing real surplus estimates with "capital gains" based on enslaved reproduction, i.e. the production of bonded children. Amalgamating these "gains," Conrad and Meyer suggested average rates of profit in the antebellum South of between 6 and 8 percent annually. Using more extensive data of the same sort, but with more accurate cost estimates, Fogel and Engerman concluded that the average rate of return to planters was in the range of 10 percent annually. See Conrad and Meyer, "Economics of Slavery," and Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the Cross*, 70. For an insightful overview of the failings of the "neoclassical synthesis" in modern economics, see Fine and Milonakis, *From Economics Imperialism to Freakonomics*. For my reflections on the fetishistic concepts of neoclassical models, see McNally, "From Fetishism to 'Shocked Disbelief,'" 12–13.

9. Kilbourne, *Debt, Investment, and Slaves*, 49–50; Foust and Swan, "Productivity and Profitability." The estimates by Foust and Swan to which I refer involve their "Variant II" projections on 53–54.

10. Marx, "Results of the Immediate Process," 1052; Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, v. 3: 275. Italics in the original in both quotes.

11. Hall, "Incalculability as a Feature of Sugar Production," 305–18; Tomich, *Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar*, 203, 211; Post, *American Road*, 132; Nesbitt insists that New World slaves "by definition" did not produce surplus value. *Price of Slavery*, 3, 5, 6, 35, 50.

12. Marx, *Capital*, v. 3: ch. 48.

13. Marx, "Results," 980, 981.

14. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 270. Nick Nesbitt misunderstands the meaning of labor-power too. He writes (*Price of Slavery*, 211n125) that in the capitalist mode of production "labor itself becomes a commodity, in the form of labor-power." This is entirely misguided. Marx insists that labor is not and can never be a commodity. Labor is the living *activity* of people engaged in the act of production. It is not a commodity; it is not a good that is transacted on the market (the sphere of exchange). For this reason, labor does not (and cannot) "become" a commodity—which is why it "has no value itself" (see *Capital*, v. 1: 677). *Labor-power* is a commodity when workers sell their *ability* to work. This is a point of fundamental importance in the Marxian critique of political economy. Yet, Nesbitt repeatedly insists (e.g., four times in *Price*, 84–85) that slaves could not have produced surplus value because their *labor* was "non-commodified." Yet, the same is true, of course, for "free" wage laborers. Their labor—the living capacity expended in production—is also non-commodified, i.e. it is not a commodity available for purchase on the market. The *capacity* for labor has been contracted for sale in advance as a potentiality, not an actuality. Its actualization occurs after its sale has been contracted. What is commodified is their ability to work, their *labor-power*, which is available on the market in the form of their persons. By Nesbitt's argument, since the "labor" of wage workers is "non-commodified," they too could not produce surplus value.

15. I say *effectively* constant because changes in value relations will affect the current value of products of *past* labor. But at this stage of analysis, Marx appropriately abstracts from such changes. I should add that the labor a commodity "absorbs" is not immediate, concrete labor but socially necessary abstract labor.

16. Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, v. 3: 275.

17. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 361. Marx rightly argues in *Capital* that a capitalist with a new (not yet general) technology that boosts productivity will claim an extra surplus value above the average. But it is above average productivity *of labor* that makes this possible, not the machinery per se.

18. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 682.

19. Browne, *Surviving Slavery*, 166; da Costa, *Crowns of Glory*, 62.

20. As we shall see, their prices were governed by capitalizations of future surplus value.

21. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: ch. 16; Higman, *Slave Populations*, 188. For a low-end estimate of hours worked by enslaved workers in the cotton states of the US South, see Olson, "Clock Times versus Real Time," 227–28. Note that Olson's estimates (which are reproduced in Fogel, *Without Consent or Contact*, 77) do not include hours worked on slave gardens and provision grounds in order to feed households and/or to produce small amounts for market sales.

22. Voth, *Time and Work in England*, 130. According to Voth, British factory workers may have toiled for as many as 4,000 hours per year. See also

Kuszynski, *Short History of Labor Conditions*, v. 1: 44–45, and Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," 56–97.

23. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 443.

24. Eltis, Lewis, and Richardson, "Slave Prices," 693; Burnard and Garrigus, *Plantation Machine*, 171; Follett, *Sugar Masters*, 25.

25. Rosenthal, *Accounting for Slavery*, 101; Chaplin *Anxious Pursuits*, 247. On rice plantations in the antebellum South, see Dusinberre, *Them Dark Days*. On cotton, see Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*; Dattel, *Cotton and Race*. For a discussion of the task and gang system in the US South, see Morgan, "Task and Gang Systems." See also Wright, *Slavery and American Economic Development*, 95.

26. Fogel, *Without Consent*, 78–79; Olson, "Clock Time," 235.

27. Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 152–53; Olmstead and Rhode, "Biological Innovation and Productivity Growth."

28. Marx, *Capital*, v. 2: 122. For a useful survey of key issues involved, see Mann, *Agrarian Capitalism*. On shifting cultivation in the antebellum South, see Majewski, *Modernizing a Slave Economy*, 23–35.

29. Chaplin, *Anxious Pursuits*, 232–40, 264, 296, 305, 140–42. See also Olmstead and Rhode, *Creating Abundance*; Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, ch. 4; and Burnard and Garrigus, *Plantation Machine*, 40.

30. Walsh, *Motives of Honor*, 99–100, 182; Eltis, Lewis, and Richardson, "Slave Prices," 698. As Gavin Wright points out, there is some confusion in these accounts between growth of labor inputs and growth of labor productivity. See Wright, *Slavery*, 24–26. However, Wright errs in seeing the enormous increase in cotton picking yields per day as having "little to do with work organization" (91). Clearly, organization, discipline, and control were essential to push human bodies to ever faster and more exhausting intensities of work. On the second slavery, see Tomich, *Through the Prism of Slavery*, and Kaye, "Second Slavery."

31. Eltis, Lewis, and Richardson, "Slave Prices," 673–700; Eltis, *Rise of African Slavery*, 220; Dusinberre, *Them Dark Days*, 405.

32. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 230, table 10.3; da Costa, *Crowns of Glory*, 47; Higman, *Slave Populations*, 105, table 5.2; Dublin, *Women at Work*, 133.

33. James, *Black Jacobins*, 85–86. James also acknowledges here that slaves hated their masters "like revolutionary peasants everywhere." This too, as we shall see, was typical of rural wage workers in Europe.

34. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 219; Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 90–91, 189–96; Lloyd-Jones and Le Roux, "Size of Firms in the Cotton Industry," 72–81; Blackburn, *Making of New World Slavery*, 410, 415; Berg, *Age of Manufactures*, 230–31; Hobsbawm, *Age of Revolution*, 40.

35. Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, v. 1: 389; Burnard, "'Prodigious Riches'," 517–20; Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 190.

36. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 96–97; Wright, *Political Economy of the Cotton South*, 35–36; Waterhouse, *New World Gentry*, 60–61, tables 3.6–3.10 (for tax and census data, see 62–63); Linden, "Economic Democracy in the Slave South," 163. Gavin Wright suggests (*Political Economy*, 73–86) that there may not have been economies of scale in antebellum cotton production—i.e. increasing rates of return to larger plantations. My view is that economies of scale did apply in cotton but were smaller than those in enslaved production of sugar.

37. Craton and Walvin, *A Jamaica Plantation*, 169–75. Interestingly, Rose Price had to considerably increase the estate's debts to carry out these improvements, resulting in a debt dependence that further locked the plantation into its cost-minimizing and output-maximizing strategy.

38. Ingraham, *Southwest*, v. 2: 91; Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 742.

39. Bentley, "Wealth Distribution in Colonial South Carolina," 93–94.

40. Olmstead and Rhode, "Productivity Growth," 203; Tomich, *Through the Prism of Slavery*, ch. 3; Olmstead and Rhode, *Creating Abundance*; Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 244; Dusinberre, *Them Dark Days*, 405. Edward Baptist has pointed out that Olmstead and Rhode err in attributing enhanced plantation productivity to bio-technological innovation alone. See Baptist, "Toward a Political Economy," 42–43.

41. I am bracketing here the relationship between the rate of return on land, the length of the turnover period, and the prevailing rate of interest. A turnover period of twenty years, for instance, typically presupposes an interest rate of 5 percent. For more on Marx's theory of agricultural rent, see Harvey, *Limits to Capital*, ch. 11, and Fine and Saad-Filho, *Marx's Capital*, ch. 13.

42. Marx, *Capital*, v. 3: 944.

43. To be stolen and sold, as were enslaved Africans, is not to be *produced* as a commodity based on socially necessary labor time; it is merely to be exchanged as a commodity.

44. Marx, *Capital*, v. 3: 945.

45. Marx, "Economic Manuscript of 1861–63," 442. See also Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 376–77: "By extending the working day, therefore, capitalist production . . . extends the worker's production-time within a given period by shortening his life." John Clegg and Duncan Foley have developed an interesting model for assessing slave prices and surplus value per bondperson. They suggest that slave prices expressed not surplus value in general but the *excess* surplus value per bondperson relative to nonchattel workers (due to the lower wages and longer hours of bondpeople made possible by the extreme powers of coercion over chattel workers). Theirs is an intriguing analysis that deserves further engagement. In particular, it needs to be amended by way of an adequate account of bio-social reproduction, which they tend to naturalize. See Clegg and Foley, "A Classical Marxian Model," 107–34.

46. Gray, *History of Agriculture*, v. 1: 473, 474.

47. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 252, table 11.4; Pares, *Merchants and Planters*, 38; Ransom and Sutch, "Capitalists without Capital," 135 and 150–51, table A.1; Rönnbäck, "Were Slaves Cheaper Laborers?," 728–29; Lebergott, *Americans*, 213–14; Campbell, *Empire for Slavery*, 69. See also Hughes, "Slaves for Hire," 277. The best overall study in this area is Zaborney, *Slaves for Hire*. I should note here that Ransom and Sutch's idea that enslaved workers were "fixed capital," a notion shared by Rönnbäck, represents a fetishistic displacement of the value-creating role of living labor.

48. Editorial, *Federal Union*, January 17, 1860; Anonymous, "Effects of High Prices of Slaves."

49. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 526.

50. Clegg and Foley, "Classical Marxian Model," 116–17.

51. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 724.

52. Jobson, "Dead Labor," 220; Marx, *Poverty of Philosophy*, 55; Martineau, *Time, Capitalism and Alienation*, 139.

CHAPTER 5. THE WAGES OF SLAVERY

Epigraph: James, *Black Jacobins*, 85–86.

1. Wynter, "Black Metamorphosis," 42.

2. A particularly egregious example of this sort of argument has been advanced by Nick Nesbitt in a misguided attack on C.L.R. James. See Nesbitt, "Slave Machine," 11, 13, 15, 17. The theoretical tradition that informs this critique of James is the formalist-structuralist one associated with Louis Althusser and the early writings of Étienne Balibar ("Slave Machine," 16–18). It is jarring to see Nesbitt (16n42) associate this anti-Hegelian (and antidialectical) tradition with the explicitly Hegelian-dialectical perspectives of Fred Moseley, Tony Smith, Moishe Postone, and others. The dialectical tradition sets itself against the abstract formalism and legalism at the heart of Althusser's understanding of *Capital*, particularly his hostility to Marx's conception of the fetishism of commodities. In *Price of Slavery*, Nesbitt has downgraded the structuralist argument to locate his position in the "value-form" tradition of the Marxist critique of political economy.

3. Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, 8.

4. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 100.

5. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 152.

6. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 163.

7. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 317; Marx, *Grundrisse*, 101. For an excellent treatment of Marx's understanding of things as relations, see Ollman, *Alienation*, ch. 3.

8. Engels, "Preface" to Marx, *Capital*, v. 3: 103. To be clear, I see Marx's procedure in *Capital* as developing by means of the logical formation of concepts. But I insist that this involves a logic saturated by historical content. Marx's starting point in his critique of political economy—the commodity—is itself historically determined, as he well knows. In pursuing a dialectical-logical formation of concepts—e.g., commodity–money–capital–labor power–surplus value, etc.—Marx does not follow a historical sequence, but he does grasp a historically determinate logic of capital.

9. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 26, 31, 32, 30, 40, 32.

10. Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, 430; Lukacs, "N. Bukharin. Historical Materialism," 135. For the work in dispute, see Bukharin, *Historical Materialism*.

11. Banaji, "Modes of Production."

12. Lenin, *Development of Capitalism*, 199; Lenin, "Economic Content of Narodnism," 484.

13. Nesbitt, *Price of Slavery*, 69.

14. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 415, 719, 723, 519, 724n20. I have pursued the theme of the bodily unfreedom of wage laborers in McNally, *Monsters of the Market*, ch. 2. On the basis of these comments by Marx, Nesbitt suggests that

these women and children could not have produced surplus value (*Price of Slavery*, 48). Here again, he erroneously conflates the legal relation of juridical freedom with the social relation of surplus-value production.

15. Marx, "Results of the Immediate Process of Production," 1064.

16. The classic study of service in English agriculture is Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry*, 3, 4, 11. On the distinction between service and apprenticeship in English husbandry, see Tomlins, *Freedom Bound*, 79–80. On coerced labor in the British colonies, see Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 123, and Newman, *New World of Labor*, 30–31. On coercion of sailors, see Rogers, *Press Gang*, and Marcus Rediker, *Slave Ship*, 137–38. On Chinese indentured workers in Cuba, see Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*, 13–14, 29–33 (quote at 30). On indentured workers from Asia in the British West Indies, see Lai, *Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar.* For Louisiana, see Ho-Jung, *Coolies and Cane*.

17. Deakin and Wilkinson, *Law of the Labour Market*, 62. See also Steinberg, "Marx, Formal Subsumption and the Law," 183; Gerstenberger, *Market and Violence*, 110.

18. Liu, *Tea War*, ch. 4; Craven and Hay, "Criminalization of 'Free' Labour," 72, 83, 80; Rockman, *Scraping By*, 6; Berlin et al., *Slaves No More*, 166; Williams, *I Freed Myself*, 185–86, 216–17; Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 6. All of these examples refute Nesbitt's claim (*Price of Slavery*, 34) that, "unlike slaves, laborers by law can quit their employment." On wages in kind as a regular form of compensation to "free" sharecroppers, see Saville, *Work of Reconstruction*, 111.

19. Steinfeld, *Coercion, Contract, and Free Labor*, 9, 29, 33. On bondage and vagrancy laws in the United States, see Magliari, "'A Species of Slavery'," 524, 526; Kiser, "A 'Charming Name for a Species of Slavery'," 169–89; Harris, "The Racial Alchemy of Debt," 103–4; California, "An Act to Punish Vagrants, Vagabonds, and Suspicious Persons," 217; O'Brassil-Kulfan, "Vagabonds and Paupers," 443–69; Wolpe, "The 'White Working Class' in South Africa," 203.

20. I emphasize wages in money here since subsistence goods paid to enslaved people can appropriately be considered wages in kind. In some quarters, there has been a propensity to conflate wage-earning by bondpeople with being "capitalist actors." See, for instance, the otherwise valuable study by Justine Hill Edwards, *Unfree Markets*, 7, which makes this unfortunate conflation. Trevor Burnard, focusing on the petty sales by bondpeople in markets, even goes so far as to baldly claim that "slaves were capitalists." See Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 154. To participate in the market—as a seller of labor-power or a petty trader—does *not* make an individual a capitalist. A capitalist is one who owns sufficient means of production to be able to live off profits derived from the labor of others. Neither bondpeople nor "free" wage laborers qualify as capitalists. Rather than being capitalist actors, their interests were structurally *antithetical* to those of capitalists.

21. Ball, *Fifty Years in Chains*, 24, 41, 47, 89, 132, 64, 135, 92.

22. Olmsted, *Cotton Kingdom*, 67, 73, 63, 75, 58; Gus Feaster, as cited by Edwards, *Unfree Markets*, 1; Mason, *Life of Isaac Mason*, 18, 20: Pinckney, letter to Alexander Garden, May 14, 1782; Dunn, *Tale of Two Plantations*, 365–67; Hughes, *Thirty Years a Slave*, 122.

23. Laurens, letter to Alexander Hamilton, April 19, 1785; Campbell, "As 'a Kind of Freeman'?," 247–48; Kaye, *Joining Places*, 102; Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 105; "John Ball's Planting Book, 1780–1784," as quoted by Chaplin, *Anxious Pursuit*, 262; Cecelski, *Waterman's Song*, 132; Smedes, *Memorials of a Southern Planter*, 68; McDonald, *Economy and Material Culture*, 58.

24. Cheney, *Cul de Sac*, 76; Tomich, *Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar*, 33; Schoelcher, *Des colonies françaises*, 13; Browne, *Surviving Slavery*; Burnard, "The Importance of Grass Crops," 172–73.

25. Wood, *Black Majority*, 207; McDonald, "Independent Economic Production," 285–86

26. Jones, letter to Charles C. Jones Sr., October 1, 1856, 240; Blackburn, *Reckoning*, 168; Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 58–59; Bennett, *Bondsmen and Bishops*, 65–66; da Costa, *Crowns of Glory*, 60; Newman, *New World of Labor*, 227.

27. Lewis, *Journal of a West Indian Proprietor*, 164–65; Buchanan, *Black Life on the Mississippi*, 92–93; Barclay, *Practical View of the Present State of Slavery*, 115; Grandy, *Narrative of the Life of Moses Grandy*, 7, 16, 27; Kaye, *Joining Places*, 117; Cateau, "The New 'Negro' Business, 101–2; Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 133; Morgan, "Colonial South Carolina Runaways"; Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion*, 109.

28. Probate Records, 1854–56 (Folder 2), document of November 2, 1855, Benjamin Roach Family Papers; Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 152–53; Richard Follett, *Sugar Masters*, 139, 201, 141; Schwarz, *Sugar Plantations in Brazilian Society*, 156.

29. As quoted by Morgan, "Task and Gang Systems," 212; Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*, 13; Marquese, "African Diaspora, Slavery, and the Paraiba Valley," 202; McDonald, *Economy and Material Culture*, 63–67, 40; Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 202.

30. Evans, "Report of the Committee on Cotton," 180, cited by Campbell, "As 'a Kind of Freeman'?," 254. On Chestnut, see Chaplin, *Anxious Pursuit*, 327, and Brown, *Narrative of William W. Brown*, ch. 3–9.

31. Buchanan, *Black Life on the Mississippi*, 93; Parker, *Recollections of Slavery Times*; Thompson, "*The Only Unavoidable Subject of Regret,*" 123–24, 193–94, 233, 260, 263; Lund Washington, Account Book, 149.

32. Downey, *Planting a Capitalist South*, 97; Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South*, 11, 130; Moore, *Andrew Brown and Cypress Lumbering*, 22–23, 27, 30, 134.

33. Eaton, "Slave-Hiring in the Upper South," 669; Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South*, 100; Eaton, "Slave-Hiring," 670; Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 46; Dew, *Bond of Iron*, 119; Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery*, 184–85, 198, 197, 147.

34. Rood, *Reinvention of Atlantic Slavery*, 190–91; Rockman, *Scraping By*, 183; Eaton, "Slave-Hiring," 671; Olmsted, *Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*, 82–85; Stowe, *Dred*, v. 2: 303.

35. Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House*, 200; Anonymous, "Management of Negroes upon Southern Estates," 624; McDonald, "Independent Eco-

nomic Production," 285; Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery*, 199–200; Higman, *Slave Populations*, 203; McDonald, *Economy and Material Culture*, 37.

36. Browne, *Surviving Slavery*, 161–62.

37. McDonald, *Economy and Material Culture*, 76.

38. Dickson, *Letters on Slavery*, 14.

39. Dunn, *Tale of Two Plantations*, 96; Follett, *Sugar Masters*, 209; McDonald, *Economy and Material Culture*, 60–61; Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment*, 247; Parker, *His Promised Land*, 64; Robinson, *From Log Cabin to the Pulpit*, 26, 13. Unfortunately for Robinson, his master later deceived him and sold him back into bondage.

CHAPTER 6. STEAL AWAY

Epigraph: Lord, *Effects of Secession*, 61.

1. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 1; Matilda Anderson as quoted by Kaye, *Joining Places*, 116; Robinson, *From Log Cabin to Pulpit*, ch.1; Douglass, *My Bondage*, ch. 21; Cecelski, "Abraham Galloway"; Penningroth, *Claims of Kinfolk*, 81–82; Chaplin, *Anxious Pursuit*, 353; Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 140; Chestnut, *Diary from Dixie*, 162.

2. Turner, "Chattel Slaves into Wage Slaves," 33; Mair, *Historical Study of Women*, 247; B.S. Herndon to Lewis Hill, December 31, 1853, as cited by Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery*, 109–10; Campbell, *Empire for Slavery*, 130, 183; Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 142; Martin, *Divided Mastery*, ch. 2; Rockman, *Scraping By*, 124; Russell, *North America*, 151; Franklin and Schweninger, "Quest for Freedom," 21; Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 392.

3. Grandy, *Narrative of the Life of Moses Grandy*, 37; Mair, *Historical Study of Women*, 247; Rogers, Chestnut, and Clark, *Papers of Henry Laurens*, v. 5: 201; Elizabeth Smith as quoted in Wood, *Black Majority*, 208–9, my emphasis.

4. Sarah DeFollonare as quoted by Wilson, *Bonds of Empire*, 258; Brown, *Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown*, ch. 10 and 37–40; *Texas State Gazette* (Austin), July 19, 1851.

5. Rockman, *Scraping By*, 60–61, 63, 71, 112–15, 183; Dubois, *Colony of Citizens*, 81, 82, 83.

6. Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 333; Grandy, *Narrative of the Life*, 29–30; Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery*, 28–39; Ferebee, *Brief History of the Slave Life*, 6–7; Davis, *Narrative of the Life of Rev. Noah Davis*, 54–59.

7. Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 332; Chaplin, *Anxious Pursuit*, 354; Wood, *Black Majority*, 207–9; Offley, *Narrative of the Life and Labors of the Rev. G. W. Offley*, 7–12; Buchanan, *Black Life on the Mississippi*, 108; Brown, *Narrative of the Life*, ch. 12; Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 27, 33–36.

8. Randolph, *From Slave Cabin to Pulpit*, 191; Martin, *Divided Mastery*, 2; quotations concerning Abe and Simon from Buchanan, *Black Life on the Mississippi*, 23, 22. For the Galveston six, see Shelton, "Slavery in a Texas Seaport," 158. On Esther and Sally Williams, see Mair, *Historical Study of Women*, 247–48. For whites aiding escapes, see Egerton, "Slaves to the Marketplace," 62, and Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion*, 106, 113.

9. Ball, *Slavery in the United States*, 273; Olmsted, *Cotton Kingdom*, 48; Rood, *Reinvention of Atlantic Slavery*, 145, 164; Buchanan, *Black Life on the Mississippi*, 24–25; *South Carolina Gazette*, November 5, 1763.

10. Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 21, 34–43; Douglass, *My Bondage*, 197–99; Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 1–2.

11. Rucker, *River Flows On*, 137–44, 166, 170–72; Martin, *Divided Mastery*, 178; Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 157, 118, 121, 260; Clavin, *Battle of Negro Fort*, 85–86; da Costa, *Crowns of Glory*, 182, 190, 198; Zoellner, *Island on Fire*, 83. There is considerable controversy over the actuality of Denmark Vesey's conspiracy. See, for example, Johnson, "Denmark Vesey and his Co-Conspirators." It is significant, however, that enslaved craftworkers were alleged to have been centrally involved.

12. Egerton, "Slaves to the Marketplace," 618, 622, 618–19n3. For a thoughtful critique of this argument, see Johnson, "Clerks All!"

13. For a modern analysis in these terms, see Jacobs, "An Urban Proletariat."

14. Elizabeth Fenwick as quoted by Beckles, *Natural Rebels*, 62–63; Edwards, *Unfree Markets*, 5–6.

15. For just two cases in point, see Harriet Jacobs's discussion of her own experience in *Incidents in the Life*, 25–27, and Solomon Northup's description of Patsey's abuse at the hands of Edwin Epps in *Twelve Years a Slave*, 188–89. On the legal impossibility of rape of chattel women, see Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, ch. 3. On the threats to bondwomen in urban settings, see Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, ch. 2.

16. Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 26, 28, 159, 217, 226, 266, 228–39; Rogers, "Réussir dans un monde d'hommes."

17. On Corinna Hinton, see Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery*, 110–13, and Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 197.

18. Beckles, *Natural Rebels*, 142; Berlin, *Slaves without Masters*, 265; Handler, "Joseph Rachell," 382–87; Bush, *Slave Women*, 31; Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 60–63. On the leasing out of pregnant bondwomen in Virginia, see Zaborney, *Slaves for Hire*, ch. 2.

19. Dunn, *Tale of Two Plantations*, 96, 99, 162; Lewis, *Journal of a West Indian Proprietor*, 61–62; McDonald, *Economy and Material Culture*, 37; Turner, *Contested Bodies*, 107, 108; Dickson, *Letters on Slavery*, 12; Beckles, *Natural Rebels*, 101.

20. White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?*, 100; Camp, *Closer to Freedom*; Collini, "Labor of Enslaved Midwives"; Henry A. Middleton Jr. Plantation Journal, 1855–61, as quoted by Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House*, 200; Thompson, "*Only Unavoidable Subject,*" 137; Hammond, "Plantation Rules," 88–90; Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 226.

21. Bancroft, *Slave-Trading*, 154; Jones-Rogers, *They Were Her Property*, 102.

22. Kolchin, *American Slavery*, 172. It is certainly true that the buying or selling of labor-power was overshadowed by the direct domination of bonded labor. But chattel laborers entered wage relations more frequently than Kolchin and others recognize. Furthermore, the key question is whether bonded workers were producing surplus value objectified in commodities.

23. Follett, *Sugar Masters*, 210. To get around the obvious conclusion that there was a capitalist labor market in the plantation system, liberals typically insist that the sale of labor-power must be free and voluntary. This, however, is to elevate legal rights, not social relations of production, as definitive of capitalism. Nick Nesbitt in *Price of Slavery*, 34, tends in this direction in his effort to construct an artificial barrier between capitalism and Atlantic slavery.

24. Post, *American Road*, 132.

25. Post, *American Road*, 133. The same (erroneous) position is taken by Dupuy, *Rethinking the Haitian Revolution*, 31. For a statement of the neoclassical labor market efficiency argument, see Duesenberry, "Some Aspects of the Theory." For evidence that planters were in fact highly responsive to changes in market prices, see Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract*, 94.

26. Clegg, "Capitalism and Slavery," 299; Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*, xxxi; Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the Cross*, 56; Rockman, *Scraping By*, 57, 112; Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery*, 156–57.

27. On the migration from the Upper to the Lower South of the United States, see Boles, *Black Southerners*, 68, and Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 5. For slaves and the Louisiana credit market, see Kilbourne, *Debt, Investment, Slaves*, 49–56. The quote from a Texas planter is from Campbell, *Empire for Slavery*, 92. For examples of loans secured against bondpeople, see Kilbourne, *Debt, Investment, Slaves*, ch. 3. On the slave market in the antebellum South generally, see Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*. On Brazil, see Slenes, "Brazilian Internal Slave Trade," 325–70. Again, while insisting that bondpeople functioned as variable capital *in the production process*, I acknowledge that they were bought and sold as capital assets in order to secure units of potential labor-power. This is the very meaning of *bonded labor-power*.

28. Mattison, *Louisa Picquet, the Octoroon*, 7; Mason, *Life of Isaac Mason*, 4; Parker, *His Promised Land*, 40, 41, 75, 83; Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave*, 126–27, 192–94; Bradford, *Harriet*, 17–21; Pennington, *Fugitive Blacksmith*, 7–8; Perdue, Barden, and Phillips, *Weevils in the Wheat*, 153.

29. "Act for the Better Governing," 408–13; Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects*, 164.

30. Walsh, "Work and Resistance," 107–8; Wiencek, *Master of the Mountain*, 86–89; Martin, *Divided Mastery*, 30.

31. Hughes, "Slaves for Hire," 264–65; Zaborney, *Slaves for Hire*, 162; Faust, *James Henry Hammond*, 128.

32. Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave*, 145, 147. On hiring brokers, see Eaton, "Slave-Hiring," 663–78; Olmsted, *Journey in the Seaboard*, 30–31; Eaton, "Slave-Hiring," 675. For jobbing gangs in the British West Indies, see Radburn and Roberts, "Gold versus Life." For slave hiring in Jamaica, see Dunn, *Tale of Two Plantations*, 134, and Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 68–69.

33. Buchanan, *Black Life on the Mississippi*, ch. 1; Bancroft, *Slave-Trading*, 147–48. Loren Schweninger suggests that 10 percent of enslaved people in Virginia were rented out in 1860. See Schweninger, "Underside of Slavery," 12, and Martin, *Divided Mastery*, 8.

34. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life*, 11–12.

35. Eaton, "Slave-Hiring," 666; Zaborney, *Slaves for Hire*, 90; Martin, *Divided Mastery*, 4–5, 153.

36. Barton, "'Good Cooks and Washers,'" 440; Debien, "Le Marronage," 26; Washington, "List of Negroes." On the wealthiest as the primary hirers of bonded labor, see Campbell, "Slave Hiring in Texas," 107–14. Data for Faquier County, Virginia, in 1860 show nonslaveowners as a majority of those hiring slaves, while evidence from Lancaster County two years earlier indicate that established planters were significant renters of hired bonded labor. See Zaborney, *Slaves for Hire*, 108, 161.

37. Barton, "'Good Cooks'," 444; Conrad and Meyer, "Economics of Slavery," 95–130; Zaborney, *Slaves for Hire*, 154. See also Follett, *Sugar Masters*, 87. On rising slave prices in Jamaica, see Burnard and Garrigus, *Plantation Machine*, 171.

38. Lenin argued in the case of proletarianized "peasant" laborers in Russia in the 1890s that even their allotments of land from the landlord were a form of wages in kind. See Lenin, *Development of Capitalism*, 205.

39. Marx, "Letter to Engels, September 25, 1857," 97. On Sismondi, see the passage cited by Braudel, *Wheels of Commerce*, 288; Anthony, "Farm Servants"; Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*, 91; Kurosaki, "Wages in Kind."

40. Madison's estimates are cited by Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion*, 52. For John Palfrey's estimates, see McDonald, *Economy and Material Culture*, 161. On Asian indentured laborers in Cuba, see Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba*, 30–31. A set of industrialists' calculations is surveyed by Starobin, *Industrial Slavery*, 168–72. It should be noted that where planters employed seamstresses in making slave clothing, the costs of their upkeep too were part of the general costs of socially reproducing the bonded workforce.

41. McDonald, *Economy and Material Culture*, 113–20, 126–28, 150 (quotes from Philips at 113 and 120). On Berbice, see Browne, *Surviving Slavery*, 157–58.

42. Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, 204.

43. In addition to the errors of Tomich, Nesbitt, and Post in this regard, see Anderson and Gallman, "Slaves as Fixed Capital," 24–46. See also Justin Roberts's claim that slaves "were fixed capital" in *Slavery and the Enlightenment*, 38 and 82. On the question of variable versus constant capital, Alex Dupuy vacillates. He writes, "it is true that the slaves were part of the 'fixed' or 'constant,' as opposed to the 'variable' capital investments of the plantation," but he then shifts his position, arguing "the slave was both *constant* and *variable* capital." See Dupuy, *Rethinking the Haitian Revolution*, 24, 25. There are two critical problems here. First, fixed capital is not the same thing as constant capital—the former, which refers to long-term investments in "fixed" structures, like machines and buildings, is only one component of constant capital (elements of dead labor), which also includes raw materials and other nonlabor items turned over rapidly within the production process. In shoe making, for instance, leather and sewing machines are both elements of constant capital, but only the latter is a "fixed" form of constant capital. As for the purchase of the slave, as we have seen, this is a speculative investment in the future profitability of the employment of enslaved labor-power.

44. See Marx's famous discussion of "the fetishism of commodities" in *Capital*, v. 1: ch. 1, pt. 4. The obverse side of such fetishism is the projection of human social powers onto things. Note that I refer to social death as "tendential." It was not, and could never be, an accomplished fact.

45. Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, 58. See also Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*, 50, and Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 63.

46. McNally, *Monsters of the Market*, ch. 2.

47. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, 122.

48. Lord, *Effects of Secession*, 61.

CHAPTER 7. BONDED PROLETARIANS

Epigraph: Olmsted, *Journey in the Back Country*, 476.

1. Oakes, *Slavery and Freedom*, 4, 7; Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 244, 253.

2. James Carter as quoted in Flanders, *Plantation Slavery in Georgia*, 122.

3. Brown, *Reaper's Garden*.

4. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 63; Goveia, *West Indian Slave Laws*, 34. See also Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 31; Follett, *Sugar Masters*, 210–17; Berry, "'Broad Is de Road," 147.

5. Schoelcher, *Des colonies françaises*, 10, 13; Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*, 129; Morgan, "Ownership of Property," 69, 399–420; Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 113, 374; Morgan, *Emancipation in Virginia's Tobacco Belt*, 45; Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 99–100; Schweninger, "Underside of Slavery," 8.

6. Browne, *Surviving Slavery*, 170–71; Berlin and Morgan, "Introduction," 37; Beckford, *Remarks upon the Situation*, 91; Edwards, *History Civil and Commercial*, v. 2: 137; Tomich, *Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar*, 386; Joseph Bacon quoted in Morgan, "Ownership of Property," 411; Tomich, "'Une Petite Guinée,'" 227.

7. Edwards, *Unfree Markets*, 57–58; McDonald, *Economy and Material Culture*, 110. On property inheritance by enslaved people in the US South, see Penningroth, *Claims of Kinfolk*, 89–91.

8. Oakes, *Slavery and Freedom*, 163. See Goveia, *West Indian Slave Laws*, 34.

9. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 270, my emphasis.

10. Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 143; Dabney, *Defence of Virginia*, 214.

11. Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 170.

12. James, *Black Jacobins*, 11–12.

13. Kars, *Blood on the River*, 246.

14. Jackson, *Narrative and Writings of Andrew Jackson*, 11.

15. Olmsted, *Journey in the Back Country*, 476.

16. I have examined one such standardized jailhouse receipt for "a Runaway" named John, issued by the Jail of Claiborne County, Mississippi, Probate Records, 1854–56 (folder 2), receipt of June 21, 1855, Benjamin Roach Family Papers.

17. Bennett Barrow, *Plantation Life*, 3 (October 1839), as quoted in Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 56; Olmsted, *Cotton Kingdom*, 421; Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment*, 266; Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 235; Diouf, *Slavery's Exiles*, 21–32; Tomlins, *Freedom Bound*, 466; Lorenzo L. Ivy in Perdue, Barden, and Phillips, *Weevils in the Wheat*, 154; Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment*, 265.

18. Upper Council of Le Cap, 1767, as cited by Fick, *Making of Haiti*, 50.

19. Quoted in Keller, *Solon Robinson*, 2, 296; Charles Dabney as quoted in Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion*, 30; Thompson, *"Only Unavoidable Subject of Regret,"* 8–9; Washington, letter to William Pearce; Thomas Thistlewood Diary, March 18, 1751, as quoted in Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment*, 231–32; Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 237; Olmsted, *Journey in the Seaboard States*, 435–36; Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects*, 216–17.

20. da Costa, *Crowns of Glory*, 81, 82.

21. Powell, letter to John Hartwell Cocke, August 14, 1857, in Rose, *Documentary History of Slavery*, 244–45.

22. Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 212–13; Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, v. 1: 95; Foucault, "Ethic of Care," 12, my emphases. Burnard tries (211), with a nod to Michel de Certeau, to distinguish between "opposition" and "resistance," imagining that the latter must always be antisystemic. But this is to conflate all resistance with revolutionary aspirations. The shortcomings of Foucault's notion of freedom overlap, ironically, with those identified by Herbert Marcuse with respect to the early existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre. See Marcuse, "Sartre's Existentialism," 157–90.

23. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 4–5.

24. Fick, *Making of Haiti*, 296n142; da Costa, *Crowns of Glory*, 173; McDonnell, *Considerations on Negro Slavery*, 242.

25. Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 212. For Thompson's statement on "the enormous condescension of posterity," see his *Making of the English Working Class*, 12.

26. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 188.

27. McDonnell, *Considerations on Negro Slavery*, 152–53; da Costa, *Crowns of Glory*, 73; Jeanette as quoted in Browne, *Surviving Slavery*, 59.

28. See Debien, "Le marronage aux Antilles françaises."

29. Ivy in Perdue, Barden, and Phillips, *Weevils in the Wheat*, 153; Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 234–35, 282.

30. Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 219; Philip D. Morgan, "Colonial South Carolina Runaways," 67. See also, Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion*, 109; Bush, *Slave Women*, 65.

31. Beckles, "From Land to Sea," esp. 81–90; Wood, "Some Aspects," 618–20.

32. Morgan and Nicholls, "Slave Flight," 208; Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion*, 94.

33. Isaac, *Landon Carter's Uneasy Kingdom*, 7.

34. Dew, *Bond of Iron*, 43, 44, 70, 75, 134–35, 253–54, 278–79; Robert, *Tobacco Kingdom*, 205–8; Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery*, 153.

35. Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 236; Cartwright, "Diseases and Peculiarities," 331–32.

36. Foster, "Voluntary Statement"; Olmsted, *Journey in the Back Country*, 82, 47; Scarborough, *Overseer*, 90; Rowland, *Life, Letters, and Papers of William Dunbar*, 29–30, 46–47, 55; Ball, *Fifty Years in Chains*, 81; Virginia Shepard quoted in Perdue, Barden, and Phillips, *Weevils in the Wheat*, 261; Diouf, *Slavery's Exiles*, 43; Labat, *Nouveau voyage*; Olsavsky, *Most Absolute Abolition*, 30.

37. Franklin and Schweninger, "Quest for Freedom," 37–38.

38. Olmsted, *Journey in the Back Country*, 48; Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 59; *Raleigh Register*, February 20, 1818, as cited in Phillips, *Documentary History of American Industrial* Society, v. 2: 85–86; Dunn, *Tale of Two Plantations*, 340; Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 52–54; Browne, *Surviving Slavery*, 173–74.

39. Malone, *Sweet Chariot*, 80; Heuman, "Runaway Slaves," 107; Dunn, *Tale of Two Plantations*, 150.

40. Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 2; Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs*, 43; White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?* 54, 74; Bayley, *Narrative of Some Remarkable Incidents*, 39–40; Dunn, *Tale of Two Plantations*, 171; Wood, *Black Majority*, 241; Turner, *Contested Bodies*, 204–5; Wood, "Some Aspects," 610n24 (on Nancy, Nanny, and Sally, see 620).

41. Morgan and Nicholls, "Slave Flight," 199; Cheney, *Cul de Sac*, 80–81; Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects*, 214; Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 154–55; Browne, *Surviving Slavery*, 97; Zoellner, *Island on Fire*, 106–7.

42. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 329–31; Malone, *Sweet Chariot*, 84–85; Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 101; Campbell, *Empire for Slavery*, 183; Shelton, "Slavery in a Texas Seaport," 163; Kaye, *Joining Places*, 138; Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*, 303–4.

43. Laurens, letter to Richard Oswald; Campbell, *Empire for Slavery*, 105; Federal Writers Project, *Born in Slavery*, v. 3; Oakes, *Ruling Race*, 34; Debien, "Marronage," 128. On this episode, see also Kaye, *Joining Places*, 121–23.

44. Olmsted, *Journey in the Back Country*, 47; Brown, *Tacky's Revolt*, 220–21; Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 11–12, 78; Browne, *Surviving Slavery*, 97; Mason, *Life of Isaac Mason*, 11–17; Dunn, *Tale of Two Plantations*, 359; Lorenzo L. Ivy in Perdue, Barden, and Phillips, *Weevils in the Wheat*, 153.

45. Olmsted, *Cotton Kingdom*, 74, 421; Olmsted, *Journey in the Back Country*, 88; Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave*, 245–46. On community aid to fugitives, see Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 48–49; Lorenzo L. Ivy in Perdue, Barden, and Phillips, *Weevils in the Wheat*, 154; Stampp, *Peculiar Institution*, 116–17; and Brathwaite, *Development of Creole Society*, 205.

46. Lorenzo L. Ivy in Perdue, Barden, and Phillips, *Weevils in the Wheat*, 154; Lewis, *Journal of a West Indian Proprietor*, 54; Pinckney, letter to Eliza Lucas Pinckney; Delicia Patterson in Federal Writers Project, *Slave Narratives*, v. 10 (Missouri); Mason, *Life of Isaac Mason*, 12–16; Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 138, 275; Dunbar, *Never Caught*, ch. 11.

47. Hermann, *Pursuit of a Dream*, 17–18; Debien, "Marronage," 14; Schwartz, *Born in Bondage*; Turner, *Contested Bodies*, 203–6.

48. James Habersham as quoted in Wood, "'Never on a Sunday,'" 79; Follett, *Sugar Masters*, 151.

49. Cheney, *Cul de Sac*, 80; Lewis, *Journal of a West Indian Proprietor*, 67; Beckles and Watson, "Social Protest," 283.

50. Oakes, *Ruling Race*, 180.

51. Turner, "Chattel Slaves," 36, 35; Robertson, *Letter to the Right Reverend*, 13; Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 41; Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects*, 195; Follett, *Sugar Masters*, 145.

52. As quoted in Tomich, "Petite Guinée,'" 235–36; Turner, "11 O'Clock Flog," 269.

53. Dubois, *Colony of Citizens*, 132; Turner, "Introduction," 1.

54. Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House*, 210–11; Dunn, *Tale of Two Plantations*, 359; Kars, *Blood on the River*, 194–95; Waddell, *Twenty-Nine Years in the West Indies*, as quoted in Zoellner, *Island on Fire*, 112. On arson as a tactic of rural workers in England, see the study of the "Swing Riots" of 1830 in Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*.

55. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 88; Fick, *Making of Haiti*, 296n142; Turner, "Introduction," 10, 11.

56. Rediker and Linebaugh, *Many Headed Hydra*, 193–98; William Bull to George Germain, March 22, 1781, in Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution*, v. 20: 94; Wilson, *Bonds of Empire*, 249; Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 86–87; Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects*, 262. On this period in the United States, see also Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*.

57. da Costa, *Crowns of Glory*, 47.

58. Scott, *Common Wind*.

59. Morange to Fouache, May 16, 1785; Ducrot to Morange, June 4, 1785; Morange to Fouache, October 13, 1785; Morange to Fouache, June 22, 1789, all in Geggus, *Haitian Revolution*, 26–28.

60. Hazareesingh, *Black Spartacus*, 147–49; Fick, *Making of Haiti*, 295–96n142.

61. On Point Coupée Parish, Louisiana, see Holmes, "Abortive Slave Revolt." On Curaçao, see Scott, *Common Wind*, 169–80.

62. Rasmussen, *American Uprising*; Clavin, *Battle of Negro Fort*.

63. Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 260–61; Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, ch. 9, quote at 313. An important claim for the roots of the general strike in slave struggles is Albernaz, "Abolition, Black Ultraradicalism, and the General Strike." See also Chase, "From Millennium to Anniversary," and McCalman, "Anti-Slavery and Ultra-Radicalism." For an important collection of Wedderburn's writings, see McCalman, *"The Horrors of Slavery."*

64. da Costa, *Crowns of Glory*, 173, 187; for the governor of Berbice's comment, see Henry Bentick to Earl Bathurst, April 29, 1814, as quoted in Thompson, *Documentary History of Slavery in Berbice*, 135; Williams, *I Freed Myself*, 88–89, 180; Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House*, 359; Berlin et al., *Wartime Genesis of Free Labor*, document 94. For further discussion of Bussa's Rebellion, see Beckles, *History of Barbados*, 108–16.

65. Joseph Martin, Edward Hylton, Edward Barrett, Hope Waddell, and Trelawny Parish official all quoted in Zoellner, *Island on Fire*, 85, 86, 100, 115, 116; Sir Willoughby Cotton quoted in Hart, *Slaves Who Abolished Slavery*, 258.

66. Zoellner, *Island on Fire*, 157–61 and ch. 13.

67. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 57, 67.

68. An excellent summary of this process is provided by Berlin et al. in *Slaves No More*, ch. 1.

69. Hahn, *Political Worlds of Slavery*, 56; Diary of Laura Beecher Comer, August 16, 1862, Laura Beecher Comer Papers, series 1, folder 1, Southern Historical Collection.

70. See Quarles, *Negro in the Civil War*; Cornish, *Sable Arm*; McPherson, *Negro's Civil War*. See also Berlin et al., *Slaves No More*, ch. 3.

71. Luxemburg, *Mass Strike*, ch. 4.

72. George W. Gayle to Jefferson Davis, May 22, 1861, in Crist and Dix, *Papers of Jefferson Davis*, v. 7: 175; *New York Tribune*, July 3, 1861; Henry Jones to John R. Donnell, September 22, 1862, as quoted in Wiley, *Southern Negroes*, 73–74; *New York Herald*, November 17, 1862; Wiley, *Southern Negroes*, 75 (Pugh estate), 82 (Mississippi); Joseph E. Davis to Jefferson Davis, May 22, 1861, in Crist, Dix, and Williams, *Papers of Jefferson Davis*, v. 8: 196–97; H.C. Wright to Josiah Winchester, January 6, 1864, quoted in Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House*, 361.

73. Berlin et al., *Slaves No More*, 87; *New York Tribune*, October 23, 1862; Hepworth, *Whip, Hoe, and Sword*, 27; Lizzie S. Neblett to William S. Neblett, August 13, 1863, in Murr, *Rebel Wife in Texas*, 135. On escaped slaves returning to rescue others, see Williams, *I Freed Myself*, 119, and Schwalm, *Hard Fight for We*, 97.

74. Census Return, August 20, 1863, in Hahn et al., *Freedom*, series 1, v. 1: 91; Anderson, *Brokenburn*, 33; Andrews, *War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl*, as quoted in Glymph, *Out of the House*, 105. The experience of Rachel Pearsall and of burnings in South Carolina are discussed by Glymph in *Out of the House*, 106.

75. Hahn, *Political Worlds of Slavery*, 65; Glymph, *Out of the House*, 147.

76. My account draws on the important study by Thavolia Glymph, "Rose's War." The claim that Rose was "the head of it all" is on 511.

77. Hine, "Female Slave Resistance."

78. Malone, *Sweet Chariot*, 236; Weinbaum, "Gendering the General Strike," 440.

79. Dunn, *Tale of Two Plantations*, 363; Berlin et al., *Slaves No More*, 66; Glymph, *Out of the House*, 108, 110; Schwalm, *Hard Fight for We*, 88–90; Malone, *Sweet Chariot*, 91.

80. Stevenson, *Journals of Charlotte Forten Grimké*, 444–45; Keziah Brevard as quoted in Glymph, *Out of the House*, 114; Davis, "Reflections," 13.

CHAPTER 8. LIFE-MAKING AND ENSLAVED REPRODUCTION

1. Long, *History of Jamaica*, v. 2: 437–39. The concept of biopower is associated especially with Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*.

2. For a theoretical discussion of the issues involved here, see Ferguson and McNally, "Capital, Labour-Power, and Gender Relations."

3. Spillers, "Mama's Baby," 67.

4. White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?*, 120.

5. See Buckingham, *Slave States of America*, v. 2: 193; Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 50; Laurens, letter to Richard Oswald, London, October 16, 1767, 370. On the question of procreative "increase," see Berry, *Price for Their Pound of Flesh*, 12. On the proletarian as a breeder, see Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 93.

6. Spillers, "Mama's Baby," 67; Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life*, 188–89; Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave*, ch. 18; McLaurin, *Celia, A Slave*; Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*; Olsavsky, *Most Absolute Abolition*, 31. See also Schwartz, *Born in Bondage*, 173. On mulatto children in the antebellum South, see Malone, *Sweet Chariot*, 218–23. On the effacement of rape under slavery, see Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 137–50.

7. Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery*. On women as a majority of enslaved field workers in the New World, see Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 148–50; Turner, *Contested Bodies*, 74; Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract*, 45; Moitt, "Women, Work and Resistance," 156–60.

8. Beckford, *Remarks*, 24–25; Lacharière, *De l'affranchissement*, 107.

9. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 367. For a critical assessment of these errors, see Ferguson and McNally, "Capital, Labour-Power, and Gender."

10. Mair, *Historical Study*, 219, table 6.9; Forster and Smith, "Surviving Slavery," 907–29.

11. Morgan, "Slave Women," 243–45.

12. Morgan, "Slave Women," 232; Mair, *Historical Study*, 219; Engerman, "Some Economic and Demographic Comparisons," 270–72; Dunn, *Tale of Two Plantations*, 3.

13. Eddins, "'Rejoice!"; Mair, *Historical Study*, 191, table 6.1; Tadman, "The Demographic Cost." For Barbados, see Beckles, *Natural Rebels*, 90–101, and Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 82, 84. See also Dickson, *Letters on Slavery*, 12.

14. Bennett, *Bondsmen and Bishops*; Ward, "The Amelioration," 42–42; Turner, *Contested Bodies*.

15. For South Carolina and Georgia, see White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?*, 67–69; Wood, "Some Aspects," 608; Dunn, *Tale of Two Plantations*, 69–70; and Weston, *Plantation Manual*. For Rachel O'Connor's estate, see McDonald, *Economy and Material Culture*, 160. On DeBow, see White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?*, 201–2n22. For planter records regarding births, on lighter duties nearer to children after birthing, and on reduced output of new mothers in the fields, see Schwartz, *Born in Bondage*, 46–47, 60–63, 72–73. It does not follow that there was a discrete industry in the Upper South devoted to "breeding farms." But fostering bio-social reproduction by enslaved women was an inherent part of the Southern plantation business model.

16. Stroyer, "My Life," 8–11; King, "On the Management"; Schwartz, *Born in Bondage*, 5, 76–78, 95–97.

17. Turner, *Contested Bodies*, 46, 67, 69–70, 98–101, 237; Morgan, "Slave Women," 250. On the effects of better diet and less physical punishment in increasing the productivity of bondpeople, see Ward, *British West Indian Slavery*, 190–208, 262–62.

18. Dunn, *Tale of Two Plantations*, 96, 99, 162; Lewis, *Journal of a West Indian Proprietor*, 61–62; Turner, *Contested Bodies*, 107, 108; Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 226.

19. Gutman, *Black Family*, 75.

20. *Parliamentary Papers* 1832 (127), v. 1: 151; Sheridan, *Doctors and Slaves*, 245; Turner, *Contested Bodies*, 149, 154–61, 189, 195–98, 204–6; White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?* 124.

21. Turner, *Contested Bodies*, 120, 82; Schwartz, *Born in Bondage*, 24.

22. Schwartz, *Born in Bondage*, 81, 138–41.

23. Turner, *Contested Bodies*, 62–63; Gutman, *Black Family*, 157–59. As much as Ned Sublette and Constance Sublette are right to speak of enslaved women as carrying a "capitalized womb," it does not follow that bondpeople were stripped of all choice in mating and pair-bonding. See Sublette and Sublette, *American Coast*.

24. Menard, "Maryland Slave Population"; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 358–71.

25. Hunter, *Bound in Wedlock*, 20. With respect to diverse kinship, family, and romantic relations, we have barely scratched the surface of the queer history of New World enslaved communities. For moves in this direction, see Tinsley, "Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic"; Walcott, "Black Queer Studies," 143–5; and Heintz, "Crisis of Kinship."

26. McDonald, *Economy and Material Culture*, 96, 136; Malone, *Sweet Chariot*, 14–18, 236; McDonald, *Economy and Material Culture*, 136, table 15; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 371; Burton, *In My Father's House*, 159; Gutman, *Black Family*, 144–45, 155–65; Campbell, *Empire for Slavery*, 156.

27. Kaye, *Joining Places*, 65, 72; Mair, *Historical Study*, 254–55; Browne, *Surviving Slavery*, 103–8, 119, 166; Malone, *Sweet Chariot*, 166–68, 224–26; Schwartz, *Born in Bondage*, 50–52, 174–75. On jumping the broomstick, see Gutman, *Black Family*, 275–78, and for a more cautious view, see Hunter, *Bound in Wedlock*, 46–48. Malone, *Sweet Chariot* (262), suggests that off-plantation marriages were not as common as historians have tended to assume. On the persistence of African wedding traditions in the French Caribbean, see Dubois, *Colony of Citizens*, 60. For normalization of the enslaved nuclear family in Barbados, see Beckles, *History of Barbados*, 82–84.

28. On the myth of the matriarchal slave household, see Schwartz, *Born in Bondage*, 53, and Malone, *Sweet Chariot*, 258–59.

29. Gutman, *Black Family*, ch. 6; Turner, *Contested Bodies*, 183–86; Handler and Jacoby, "Slave Names"; Blassingame, *Slave* Community, 183; Ball, *Fifty Years in Chains*, 122; Andrews, *War-Time Journal*, 358.

30. Tayler, letter to Elizabeth Frances Blyth, September 2, 1838, 339.

31. White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?*, 133; Schwartz, *Born in Bondage*, 60–61; Gutman, *Black Family*, 216, 91–92, 220.

32. Quotations from North Carolina and Georgia as cited in Gutman, *Black Family*, 225, 210. For South Carolina, see Julie Saville, *Work of Reconstruction*, 54–63. On the Jamaican episode, see Turner, "Women, Work, and Labour Law," 269.

33. Anecdote from Fannie Berry as cited in Perdue, Barden, and Phillips, *Weevils in the Wheat*, 42; Schwartz, *Born in Bondage*, 171.

34. Gutman, *Black Family*, 263; Turner, *Contested Bodies*, 210.

35. Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 151, 179, 261, 210; Rucker, *River Flows On*, 151; Blassingame, *Slave Community*, 46, 105, 22–46; Blackburn, *American Crucible*, 122. On the shortcomings of the idea that bondpeople had a pathological cultural formation, see Gutman, *Black Family*, 102, 211. On the richness of enslaved cultures in the antebellum South, see also Stuckey, "Through Prism of Folklore"; Levine, *Black Culture*; Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*; and Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*. On the community and culture of enslaved people in Jamaica, see Brathwaite, *Development of Creole Society*, especially ch. 11, 14, 15. For the Barbadian case, see Beckles, *History of Barbados*, ch. 4–5. For an excellent study of bondpeople in Antigua, see Gaspar, *Bondmen and Rebels*. On individual, family, and community survival in Berbice, see Browne, *Surviving Slavery*. For studies of obeah, see Paton, *Cultural Politics of Obeah*; Handler and Bilby, *Enacting Power*; and De Barros, "'Setting Things Right.'" On vodou (or "voodoo"), see Ramsey, *Spirits and the Law*, and Roberts, *Politics of Religion*, ch. 1.

36. Blassingame, *Slave Community*, 151.

37. Marrs, *Life and History*, 12; Anderson and Minerva Edwards in Rawick, *American Slave*, Texas Narratives, v. 4, pt. 2: 6; Mary Gladdy in Federal Writers Project, *Slave Narratives*, v. 4 (Georgia): 26; Millie Ann Smith as quoted by Campbell, *Empire for Slavery*, 175.

38. Olsavsky, *Absolute Abolition*, 42–44.

39. Davis, *Emancipation Circuit*, 47–50, 85–89, 247–50; *Equal Suffrage*; Saville, *Work of Reconstruction*, 88–101. For the classic interpretation of "organic intellectuals," see Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 5–9, 12, 94–95.

40. Beckles, "Sex and Gender," 137. It is unfortunate when Calvin Schermerhorn writes that, "within a hierarchy of values, the enslaved chose family over freedom." See Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery*, 210. While this is a valuable study, Schermerhorn's analysis is vitiated by a tendency to analyze slave networks and social alliances in transactional terms. This liberal commitment also leads him to crudely counterpose the defense of family to aspirations for freedom (210), as if "freedom" could only be imagined in purely individualist terms. Finally, his suggestion that enslaved workers and manufacturers using bonded labor had "reciprocal interests" (146) utterly disregards the reality of nonreciprocal interests based on the exploitation of that labor. On the inevitably fractured community of enslaved people in the South, and the need to avoid a "romance of community," see Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 100–101.

41. Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 201; Minutes of the Antiguan Council, July 25, 1736, as quoted by Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 120. For further assessments of the decisive role of the slave family in sustaining resilient communities, see Gutman, *Black Family*, ch. 1–4; Malone, *Sweet Chariot*, 14–19; and Blassingame, *Slave Community*, 147–51.

42. Brown, *Reaper's Garden*, 212.

43. Ellen Butler as quoted by Malone, *Sweet Chariot*, 249. While Christianity was the dominant religious idiom in slave communities, we should never forget that probably one million bonded Africans carried Islamic beliefs and practices with them. See Diouf, *Servants of Allah*. For a fascinating account of a Muslim-led slave uprising, see Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil*.

44. Mair, *Historical Study*, 251–56; Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 187–89; Higman, "Slave Family and Household," 283–84; *Parliamentary Papers*, 1832 (127), v. 1: 61; Brathwaite, *Development of Creole Society*, 204. On Seaford's estates, see Mair, *Historical Study*, 260. On the Barbadian case, see Beckles, *Natural Rebels*, 128–31.

45. Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*, 58.

46. Saville, *Work of Reconstruction*, 34; Davis, *Emancipation Circuit*, 141–42.

47. Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 15; da Costa, *Crowns of Glory*, 197–202. On the importance of organizational networks and cultures of resistance to slave resistance, see Rucker, *River Flows On*, 7, 47.

CHAPTER 9. CULTURES OF FREEDOM

Epigraph: As quoted by Gutman, *Black Family*, 210.

1. Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, ch. 8.

2. McDonald, *Economy and Material Culture*, 165–66. For the notion of "a rival geography," see Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 7. For worksites and yards as "black spaces," see Vlach, *Back of the Big House*, 15, 33–35. For the case of Mount Vernon in this regard, see Thompson, "*Only Unavoidable Subject of Regret*," 182.

3. Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 53.

4. McDonald, *Economy and Material Culture*, 111; Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave*, 241; Parker, *His Promised Land*, 59.

5. Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 7.

6. Federal Writers Project, *Slave Narrative Project*, v. 14, pt. 2; Cecelski, *Waterman's Song*, 70–71; Garland Monroe in Perdue, Barden, and Phillips, *Weevils in the Wheat*, 214.

7. Parker, *Recollections of Slavery*, 14; Ebenezer Pettigrew to James Irdell Jr., December 31, 1806, as quoted by Cecelski, *Waterman's Song*, 70; Olmsted, *Cotton Kingdom*, 68.

8. Carter, "April 26, 1770," in Greene, *Diary of Landon Carter*, v. 1: 397, and Carter, "July 8, 1771," in Greene, *Diary of Landon Carter*, v. 2: 588; Steward, *Twenty-Two Years*; Barbados Assembly and Jamaica Committee of Council quoted by Bush, *Slave Women*, 109; Savannah River Association quoted by Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 90. On nighttime as the time of rebellion, see Fick, *Making of Haiti*, 91–93, and Palmer, *Cultures of Darkness*, 180.

9. Campbell, "As 'A Kind of Freeman'?," 243–74; McDonald, "Independent Economic Production"; Tomich, "Une Petite Guinée," 226; Edward Long cited by Morgan, "Task and Gang Systems," 216; Jamaica Committee of Council, 1789, quoted in Turner, *Contested Bodies*, 62–63; da Costa, *Crowns of Glory*, 321n66.

10. Beckles, *Natural Rebels*, 72–75; Tomich, "Une Petite Guinée," 226; *South Carolina Gazette*, September 24, 1772, as quoted by Olwell, "'Loose, Idle, and Disorderly,'" 101; Olwell, *Masters, Subjects and Slaves*, 178.

11. For a useful overview of this concept in histories of slavery, see Cardosa, "Peasant Breach."

12. Lenin, *Development of Capitalism*, 202, 205.

13. For a social reproduction analysis of life-making, see Ferguson, *Women and Work*.

14. Tomich, *Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar*, 370, 369.

15. Buchanan, *Black Life*, 26–31; Beckles, *History of Barbados*, 90–97. For an illuminating discussion of port cities throughout the Atlantic World, see Scott, *Common Wind*, and Pargas, "Urban Refugees."

16. Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, 255–56. On the Diggers, see especially Winstanley, *Law of Freedom*, and Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, ch. 7. On the Spenceans, see Gallop, *Pig's Meat*; McCalman, *Radical Underworld*; and Ashraf, *Life and Times*. On the persistence of radical agrarianism well into the nineteenth century in Britain, see Chase, *"The People's Farm,"* and Bronstein, *Land Reform*. Insightful analysis of working-class agrarianism in the United States can be found in Lause, *Young America*, and Lause, *Free Labor*. Regarding demands for Black communal ownership of land, see Davis, *Emancipation Circuit*, 88, and Saville, *Work of Reconstruction*, 16–17.

17. Berlin et al., *Slaves No More*, 154.

18. Saville, *Work of Reconstruction*, 102–3, 40–44, quote at 40.

19. Jacobs, "Urban Proletariat." For important historical qualifications regarding "forty acres and a mule," see Saville, *Work of Reconstruction*, 19–20.

20. Braithwaite, "Nanny, Palmares," 127–29. To Braithwaite's list should be added Maroon societies in Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, and the US South. On Maroons in Colombia, see McFarlane, "*Cimarrones* and *Palenques*." For the Venezuelan case, see Pérez, "Journey to Freedom." On Mexico's Maroon experience, see Pereira, "Maroon Heritage." For an important overview of Maroon communities in the US South, see Diouf, *Slavery's Exiles*, as well as Blassingame, *Slave Community*, 209–15, and Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 86–89. For the French Caribbean, see Debien, "Marronage aux Antilles Françaises"; Coco, *Histoire de l'esclavage*, 84–86; and Dubois, *Colony of Citizens*, 39–40, 45, 313.

21. On North Carolina Maroons in 1821, see Aptheker, "Maroons within the Present Limits," 157; Clavin, *Battle of Negro Fort*, estimation of the peak size of the community at 92–93; and Olsavsky, *Most Absolute Abolition*, 178.

22. Robinson, "Maroons and Rebels," in Agorsah, *Maroon Heritage*, 91. For Jamaican Maroons as slaveholders, see Price, "Introduction" in Price, *Maroon Societies*, 22. For the repressive role of Maroons during the Jamaican slave rebellion of 1831–32, see Zoellner, *Island on Fire*, 135–36, 162.

23. Marx, "Inaugural Address," in Marx, *First International and After*, 79. I discuss this theme in McNally, *Against the Market*, 184–88.

24. Stewart, *View of the Past and Present State*, 249; Hindus, *Prison and Plantation*, 140; Schwartz, *Born in Bondage*, 133–34; Kay and Cary, "'They Are Indeed the Constant Plague'"; Handler, "Joseph Rachell," in Sweet and Nash, *Struggle and Survival*, 378; Wood, *Black Majority*, 210–16.

25. Olmsted, *Cotton Kingdom*, 80.

26. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life*, 226–27; Campbell, *Memoirs of Charles Campbell*, 19; Cesar's statement as quoted by Kars, *Blood on the River*, 88; Rawick, *American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, v. 2 (2) SC: 110; Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 85. The concept of moral economy is also used by Kay and Cary, "'They Are Indeed.'"

27. Stampp, *Peculiar Institution*, 125.

28. As quoted by Campbell, "As 'a Kind of Freeman'?," 272; former slave at Mount Vernon as quoted by Thompson, "*Only Unavoidable Subject of Regret,*" 272 (my emphasis).

29. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 609, 611. The "evidence" Genovese adduces for his claims is utterly beside the point. He cites (611) enslaved South Carolinian Elijah Green explaining how difficult he found it to praise a new member (by marriage) of the planter household. Needless to say, false praise for a white person, which rankled Green, had nothing in common with deception designed to conceal theft or the hiding place of an escaped person. Many enslaved people clearly reveled in the latter, as we have seen. For a compelling critique of Genovese on this point, see Lichtenstein, "'That Disposition to Theft,'" 416.

30. Ball, *Fifty Years in Chains*, 70.

31. Bibb, *Narrative of the Life*, ch. 19.

32. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 48; Isaac Mason, *Life of Isaac Mason*, 28.

33. J. Motte Alston quoted by Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*, 43; Aunt Phillis quoted by Litwack, *Been in the Storm*, 387; "Speech of John B. Rock," as quoted by Williams, *I Freed Myself*, 182.

34. As quoted by James, *Black Jacobins*, 361.

35. Sparks and Lee in Perdue, Barden, and Phillips, *Weevils in the Wheat*, 276, 196.

36. Among the best source on escapes in the United States is *Freedom on the Move*, https://freedomonthemove.org.

37. Nelson, "Who Put Their Capitalism," 295.

38. Higman, *Slave Populations*, 335.

39. Gaspar, *Bondmen and Rebels*, 140, 185–89; Gaspar, "Sugar Cultivation," 121; Robertson, *Letter to the Right Reverend*, 46–48. Wood, *Black Majority*, ch. 12 (on the Stono Rebellion); John Bauer to Ashbel Smith, June 13, 1841, in Ashbel Smith Papers, Box 2G221; Magnolia Plantation Journals, December 25, 1862, in Henry Clay Warmoth Papers and Books Papers.

40. Browne, *Surviving Slavery*, 183, 162; Ministre Secrétaire d'État, *Exposé Géneral*, 181, my translation; Governor Mathieu as cited by Tomich, *Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar*, 365.

41. Fick, *Making of Haiti*, 169, 172, 145; Dubois, *Colony of Citizens*, 109; Fisher Collection on Haiti, reel 8; Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 224–25, 253.

42. McDonnell, *Considerations on Negro Slavery*, 240–41; Bryant, *Account of an Insurrection*, 33, 29; also Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 291; Berlin et al., *Wartime Genesis*, document 106B; and Anderson, *Race and Politics*, 4.

43. da Costa, *Crowns of Glory*, 186–88; Schwartz, *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels*, 53–54, 62. Schwartz reprints all the Santana slaves' demands on 61–62.

44. Penningroth, *Claims of Kinfolk*, 49. On social reproductive activity as life-making, see Ferguson, *Women and Work*, ch. 8. See also Bhattacharyya, *Rethinking Racial Capitalism*, ch. 2.

45. Marx, *Value, Price, and Profit.*

46. See McNally, *Monsters of the Market*, ch. 2.

47. Tomba, *Marx's Temporalities*, 128, 132, 165.

48. De Genova, "A Racial Theory of Labour," 219–20.

49. This is precisely where white working-class racism can enter as a desire to separate from the proletarian condition by stigmatizing Blackness. The key study here remains Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*.

50. Saville, *Work of Reconstruction*, 4.

51. Mary Gladdy in Federal Writers Project, *Slave Narratives*, v. 4: 26; Browne, *Surviving Slavery*, 3, 188, 189.

52. Thompson, "Moral Economy of the English Crowd," 76, 78.

53. Clark, *Revolutionary Spring*, 54.

54. Olsavsky, *Absolute Abolition*, 47.

55. Beckles, "Caribbean Anti-Slavery," 16. For the African American experience, see Stuckey, "Through the Prism of Folklore."

56. As cited in Saville, *Work of Reconstruction*, 26. The idea that enslaved people were motivated by a more radical conception of freedom than that embraced by mainstream liberalism was the famous argument of C.L.R. James in *Black Jacobins*. In recent years, a wealth of material has extended James's great insight. See especially Dubois, *Colony of Citizens*; Hazareesingh, *Black Spartacus*; and Daut, *Awakening the Ashes*. For evidence of similar Black radical notions of liberty in the United States during the Civil War era, see Davis, *Emancipation Circuit*, in addition to Saville, *Work of Reconstruction*. On African American cultures of freedom, see Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*.

57. Dubois, "Enslaved Enlightenment"; Scott, *Common Wind*.

58. All quotes from Dubois, *Colony of Citizens*, 85–87, 128.

59. Blackburn, *American Crucible*, 201; Scott, *Common Wind*, 97.

60. Quotes from Dubois, *Colony of Citizens*, 111. On the commitment of Haitian revolutionaries to liberty, see Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*; Hazareesingh, *Black Spartacus*, ch.6; Blackburn, *American Crucible*, 185–87, 203; and a plethora of documents in Geggus, *Haitian Revolution*.

61. Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror*, 45, 55, 74–75; Soriano, *Tides of Revolution*, ch. 4; Scott, *Common Wind*, 169, 179–80. For important reflections on the Haitian revolutionary tradition, see Daut, *Awakening the Ashes*.

62. Garnet, "Address to the Slaves." On abolitionism and enslaved communities in the United States, see Sinha, *Slave's Cause*; Olsavsky, *Absolute Abolition*, 178; Clavin, *Toussaint L'Ouverture*, 133–40.

63. This is the argument made by Browne, *Surviving Slavery*, 188.

64. Mary as quoted by Browne, *Surviving Slavery*, 43; Berbice rebels as quoted by da Costa, *Crowns of Glory*, 216.

65. Dubois, *Colony of Citizens*, 26; Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 73.

CHAPTER 10. EMPIRES OF CAPITAL, WORLDS OF REVOLT

Epigraph: Marx, letter to Frederick Engels, January 11, 1860, 115.

1. Marx, *Contribution to the Critique*, 295. On the 1848 revolutions, see Clark, *Revolutionary Spring*. For the revolutionary involvement of Marx and Engels, see Hammen, *Red '48ers*.

2. See especially Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class*, and Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*. For a summary and critique of this position, see Drescher, *Econocide*. While Drescher scores many points regarding the continuing economic vitality and profitability of British colonial slave production, he underestimates the impact of the slave rebellions generally and the Haitian Revolution in particular in hastening British abolition.

3. A case in point is the valuable work of Dale W. Tomich, who understands that the second slavery involved subordination to the imperatives of the global capitalist economy but continues to insist, for formal definitional reasons, that this slavery was not capitalist. See Tomich, *Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar*, and Tomich, *Through the Prism of Slavery*. Robin Blackburn has offered an important appraisal of this period in *Reckoning*.

4. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire*, 111.

5. Mulhall, *Dictionary of Statistics*, 158; Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire*, 57, 64; Beckert *Empire of Cotton*, 66–67. On the emergence of cotton as Britain's dominant industry, see Deane and Cole, *British Economic Growth*, 163, and Farnie, *English Cotton Industry*. Among the best overviews of this early period of industrialization in Britain is Berg, *Age of Manufactures*.

6. Harley, "Cotton Textile Prices," 59; Dattel, *Cotton and Race*, 36.

7. Mulhall, *Dictionary of Statistics*, 158; Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, 87–96; Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*, 53–54.

8. Brazil too had significant reserves of land, but it did not have the widespread organization of planter capitalism that could provide the social foundation for massive geographic expansion and its "natural" rate of reproduction of the enslaved population did not come close to that of the United States.

9. On cotton production in Georgia and Texas, see Dattel, *Cotton and Race*, 40, 75. For Mississippi, see Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 28.

10. Hidy, *House of Baring*, 33–34.

11. Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 89; Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, 105–8; Dattel, *Cotton and Race*, 42–45; Woods, *Development Arrested*, 42–44; Torget, *Seeds of Empire*.

12. Bruchey, *Cotton and the Growth of the American Economy*, table 2C.

13. Olmstead and Rhode, *Creating Abundance*, 99–100.

14. Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 152–53; Olmstead and Rhode, "Biological Innovation." For a similar estimate of labor productivity growth in cotton, see Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 12.

15. Blackburn, *Reckoning*, 163; Fraginals, *Sugarmill*, 41; Marquese, "African Diaspora," 208.

16. Dattel, *Cotton and Race*, 33–35; Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 57–59. For transformations in rice cultivation, see Peter Coclanis, "Road to Commodity Hell," 17–19. On the growth of textile factories in the US Northeast, see Bailey, "Other Side of Slavery," 44–49.

17. On cotton packing, see Abbey, "Cotton and the Cotton Planters." For steam power, see Temin, "Steam and Water Power," 230.

18. Follett, "Rise and Fall," 72; Blackburn, *Reckoning*, 175, 176.

19. Moore, *Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom*, 71.

20. Du Bois, *Suppression of the African Slave Trade*, 107.

21. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 539.

22. Baird, *View of the Valley of the Mississippi*, 48, as cited by Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 77–78; O'Rourke and Williamson, "When Did Globalisation Begin?," 35–36; Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 107.

23. Hobsbawm, *Age of Revolution*, 44–45; Hobsbawm, *Age of Capital*, 40; Downey, *Planting a Capitalist South*, 94; Majewski, *Modernizing a Slave Economy*, 81. Marrs, *Railroads in the Old South*, table 1, suggests 7,400 miles of Southern track built in the 1850s, but William G. Thomas places it at 8,300 miles. See Thomas, "'Swerve Me?,'" 175, and Bergad, *Comparative Histories of Slavery*, 18. For railway building in Cuba, see Rood, *Reinvention of Atlantic Slavery*, 102. On railways and the Anglo settler colonies, see Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 108. On the transfer of Indigenous lands in the US to railway companies, see Dunbar-Ortiz, *Indigenous Peoples' History*, 140.

24. O'Rourke and Williamson, "Once More," table 1, 112; O'Rourke and Williamson, "When Did Globalisation Begin?"

25. Bergad, *Comparative Histories of Slavery*, 7–8; Rugemer, "What Civil War?," 21; Bose, *Peasant Labour and Colonial Capital*, 43; Allahar, "Cuban Sugar Planters," 47. On nineteenth-century Southern planters' embrace of free trade, see Schoen, "Burdens and Opportunities of Interdependence," 72; Schermerhorn, *Business of Slavery*, 19–20.

26. McMichael, *Settlers and the Agrarian Question*, 8–9, 15.

27. Harnetty, *Imperialism and Free Trade*, 4–5.

28. On nineteenth-century competition in rice production, see Coclanis, "Distant Thunder," and Coclanis, "Time in the Paddies." See also Coclanis, *Shadow of a Dream*, 134–37; Schoen, "Burdens and Opportunities," 70–71; Tomich, *Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar*, 54–74; Allahar, "Cuban Sugar Planters"; Northup, *Indentured Labor*, 30–33; and Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, ch. 8.

29. McMichael, "Crisis of the Southern Slaveholder," 46–49. See also McNally, *Blood and Money*, ch. 4.

30. Woodman, *King Cotton*, 108; Lebergott, *Americans*, 120.

31. Whitfield Brooks in *Proceedings of the Agricultural Convention*, 22.

32. Clegg, "Credit Market Discipline."

33. James Stirling, *Letters from the Slave States* (1857), as quoted by Woodman, *King Cotton*, 135.

34. Bentley, "Wealth Distribution," 93–94.

35. Anonymous, "American Cotton Trade," 226.

36. Gabriel Shaw, evidence given to the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Trade, Manufactures, and Shipping, in *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Trade, Manufactures, and Shipping*, 93.

37. Gen. George McDuffie, "Anniversary Oration," in *Proceedings of the Agricultural Convention of the State Agricultural Society of South Carolina*, 107.

38. Martin, "Neighbor to Neighbor Capitalism."

39. Mason, *Life of Isaac Mason*, 4–5; Smith, *Slavery, Family and Gentry Capitalism*, 145, 149, 167–68, 186–90, 219–20; Woodman, *King Cotton*, 48; Kilbourne, *Debt, Investment, and Slaves*, 18–22; Schweikart, *Banking in the American South*, ch. 1, 5; Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House*, 224–26.

40. Woodman, *King Cotton*, 130.

41. Tomich, *Through the Prism of Slavery*, 141.

42. Fraginals, *Sugarmill*, 133; McMichael, "Slavery in Capitalism," 344. Unfortunately, Fraginals confuses matters by insisting that slaves would ultimately become "a regressive force" (133) in sugar production, an insistence that seems to be derived from a priori conviction rather than actual evidence.

43. Marler, *Merchants' Capital*, 269, 259.

44. See Rostow, *Stages of Economic Growth*. For a mainstream summary of critical responses to modernization theory, see Tipps, "Modernization Theory." For an important Marxist intervention, see Bernstein, "Sociology of Underdevelopment."

45. Marler, *Merchants' Capital*, 52, 72, 276, 272, 55, 70, 71. For Marler's reliance on Max Weber, see 71, 193, 263–64, 267.

46. Duck, *Nation's Region*, 3.

47. Brownlee, *Dynamics of Ascent*, 248; Schweikart, *Banking in the American South*, 249.

48. Hahn, "Tobacco's Commodity Route," 104–5; Licht, *Industrializing America*, 35–36; Hart, "Charleston and the British Industrial Revolution," 41; Marrs, *Railroads in the Old South*; Schweikart, *Banking in the American South*, 246–47.

49. Graham, "Slavery and Economic Development," 634.

50. Hall, "Breaking Bread with History," 23. Hall's reference to a "subeconomic system" can be linked with what I have described in the introduction as an "inherently dynamic system in which parts and subsystems have causative powers in constituting the whole."

51. Drescher, *Econocide*, 65–74.

52. Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 260–61; da Costa, *Crowns of Glory*, 173, 187. For further discussion of Bussa's Rebellion, see Beckles, *History of Barbados*, 108–16.

53. Joseph Martin and Edward Hylton quoted by Zoellner, *Island on Fire*, 84–86; Sir Willoughby Cotton quoted by Hart, *Slaves Who Abolished Slavery*, 258. See also Bakan, *Ideology and Class Conflict in Jamaica*.

54. Zoellner (*Island on Fire*, 157–61) discusses how the violent response of the planter class pushed Sharpe to countenance an armed response by bondpeople.

55. Marx, letter to Frederick Engels, October 29, 1862, 136.

56. Nimtz, *Marx, Tocqueville, and Race*, 87.

57. Marx, letter to his uncle Lion Phillips, May 6, 1861; Marx, "Civil War in the United States"; Marx, "Criticism of American Affairs"; Marx, letter to

Frederick Engels, August 7, 1862; Marx, "Crisis over the Slavery Issue"; and Marx, "Criticism of American Affairs," all in Marx and Engels, *Civil War in the United States*, 19, 62, 123, 121, 87, 123. On the failure of the bulk of British trade union and socialist leaders to support the North in the Civil War, see Harrison, *Before the Socialists*, 40–69. For a good overview of the American Civil War as a global conflict, see Doyle, *Cause of all Nations*.

58. The claim was made by the historian Ephraim Douglas Adams in *Great Britain and the American Civil War*, 2 vols. (1925; repr. Russell and Russell, 1958), as cited by Greenleaf, "British Labor against American Slavery," 57. Henry Adams attended the great meeting of March 1863, and his report at the time was later published in Glicksburg, "Henry Adams Reports," 724–28.

59. Nimtz, *Marx, Tocqueville, and Race*, 125; Foner, *American Socialism and Black Americans*, 6, 31, 28, 16–27 (quotes at 6 and 16). I should note that Wedermeyer tended to the view that slavery was a sluggish precapitalist form of production, while Willich, to whom my position is much closer, saw plantation slavery and wage labor as "but two aspects of the same form of exploitation" (Costaguta, *Workers of All Colors*, 33). See also Honeck, *We Are the Revolutionists*, 93–94.

60. Sinha, *Slave's Cause*, 348–51; Olsavsky, *Most Absolute Abolition*, 162–87; Jackson, *Force and Freedom*; Walker, *Walker's Appeal*. On Douai, see Honeck, *We Are the Revolutionists*, 42–70, 174–75, 177–78, and 104–36 on the role of German-American women in building abolitionism. On Douai's life and activism, see Randers-Pehrson, *Adolf Douai*.

61. Lause, *Long Road to Harpers Ferry*, 88–107, 169–75, 193 (quote from John Allen at 88); Lause, *Race and Radicalism*, 25–36; Olsavsky, *Most Absolute Abolition*, 165–71. For the key role of German-American radicals, see Levine, *Spirit of 1848*. On radical abolitionists and Indigenous rights, see Joy, "The Indians' Cause." The acronym for the International Workingmen's Association is sometimes rendered as IWMA. I prefer the shorter IWA to correct the misconstrual of the organization as open to men only—which it was not.

62. Nimtz, *Marx, Tocqueville, and Race*, 67; Obermann, *Joseph Weydemeyer*, ch. 1–4. While Willich had departed from the Marx party in the immediate aftermath of the 1848–49 revolution, still hoping for a new uprising, he rejoined Marxist circles in the United States under Weydemeyer's influence.

63. Levine, *Spirit of 1848*, 223; Honeck, *We Are the Revolutionists*, 72–73. See also Costaguta, *Workers of All Colors*, 35–36.

64. Obermann, *Joseph Weydemeyer*, ch. 5. On Sigel and Börnstein, see Zimmerman, "Guinea Sam Nightingale and Magic Marx," 157–58.

65. Lause, *Long Road to Harpers Ferry*, 152, 165, 185, 188, 196; Lause, *Race and Radicalism*, 71; Montgomery, *Beyond Equality*, 415–16; Bernstein, *First International in America*, 31, 74–75. See also Hinton, *John Brown and His Men*. On Hinton's role in the First Kansas Colored Infantry Regiments, see Carter, "First Kansas Colored Infantry," 32–33. So determined is he to paint Marxists as class reductionists—in order to favor native-born US reform socialists over immigrants—that Timothy Messer-Kruse fails to register this synthesis of abolitionism and Marxian socialism. See Messer-Kruse, *Yankee International*. For a detailed critique of this text, see Nimtz, *Marx, Tocqueville, and Race*, 227–73.

66. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 414. Raya Dunayevskaya seems to have been the first to highlight the impact of the Civil War on Marx's great text. See Dunayevskaya, *Marxism and Freedom*, Ch. 5.

67. Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, 175; Roediger, *Seizing Freedom*, 139.

68. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom*, 74–76; Roediger, *Seizing Freedom*, 122–25; Foner, *Nothing but Freedom*, 85; Davis, *Emancipation Circuit*.

69. Weydemeyer, "Eight Hour Movement"; Phillips quoted by Roediger, *Seizing Freedom*, 114; Montgomery, *Beyond Equality*, 302–11 and 327. The US shorter hours movement was politically defeated in this period.

70. Montgomery, *Beyond Equality*, 249–60, 327, 333–34; Roediger, "Ira Steward"; Steward, "Poverty," 135.

71. Blackburn, *Unfinished Revolution*, 13; Marx, "Address and Provisional Rules"; Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 413–14; Marx, *Civil War in France*.

72. Marx, "On Behalf of the IWA to President Lincoln," 154, my emphasis; Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 414; Marx, "Election Results," 142; Marx, letter to Sigrid Meyer, 204, emphasis in original.

73. Marx, letter to Frederick Engels, December 11, 1869, 392, capital letters and italics omitted.

74. Anderson, *Marx at the Margins*.

75. Marx, letter to Frederick Engels, November 2, 1867, 322; Marx, letter to Paul and Laura Lafargue, 290. For an overview, see Slater and McDonough, "Marx on Nineteenth-Century Colonial Ireland."

76. Costaguta, *Workers of All Colors*, 41.

77. Roediger, *Seizing Freedom*, 139–69; Olsavsky, *Most Absolute Abolition*, 206–7.

78. Foner, *American Socialism*, 37. For an excellent discussion of this march amid the fractures in the IWA in the United States, see Plowright, "The International Workingmen's Association in the United States," 202–7.

79. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 171.

80. See especially James, *Holding Aloft the Banner*; Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom*; Davies, *Left of Karl Marx*; Perry, *Hubert Harrison*; Williams, *Making the Revolution Global*.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

1. Storey and Shapiro, "American Horror," 4; Du Bois, *Black Folk,* 383; Rockman, "What Makes the History," 462; Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 926.

2. Cohen, *Profane Illumination,* ch. 1; Lowy, *Morning Star,* 9; Greenaway, *Capitalism: A Horror Story*.

3. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1: 920 and ch. 31. I have explored these Gothic registers in *Monsters of the Market*.

4. On Slave Gothic, see Wester, *African American Gothic,* and Goddu, "The African American Slave Narrative," 71–83.

5. Nau, *Histoire des Caciques*, 13. All translations from this text are mine.

6. Nau, *Histoire des Caciques*, 12, 14. On this shared historical commitment, see Daut, *Awakening the Ashes*, ch. 1; Daut, *Baron de Vastey*; and Vastey, *Le système colonial*. On Hinton, see Lause, *Race and Radicalism*, 71. For a text

that reclaims this commitment for our moment, see Maynard and Simpson, *Rehearsals for Living*.

7. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters,* 57, 183.

8. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 16–17.

9. Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 479.

10. Marcuse, "Philosophy and Critical Theory," 153; Mary Gladdy in Federal Writers Project, *Slave Narratives*, v. 4 (Georgia): 26; Nau, *Histoire des Caciques*, 14.

11. Ira Steward, "Poverty," 135.

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